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The paper that writes you back!

The paper that never sleeps!

The paper that answers the phone!

On Voting

The United States is still young, at least by the standards of empire. But we've been around long enough for some of our citizens to pick up on one of history's most lucrative hustles—convincing us that we needn't bother with choosing our own leadership or making our own laws, that leadership is just an administrative formality best left to the experts. When we buy into this con, the clever perps can quickly assume despotic powers to make war, or at least accumulate sizable personal fortunes. How quickly we forget the hundreds of years spent in struggle for the right to select our own leaders. If that right appears trivial today, it is only because so many of us are squandering it.

For the last 6,000 years or so, to earn the privilege of electing your political representatives, you had to own 5,000 head of oxen, multiple acres of land, a football team's worth of slaves and servants, and you had to be a man. And only the progressive burghs like Athens had it that good. For everybody else, voting wasn't even an option. Skip ahead to the last American century and remember the basics: it took women several generations to secure their place at the ballot box, and for African-Americans the struggle to vote was longer, bloodier, and more painful. Since the dawn of our species, humans have been striving for the chance that now lies within our grasp: to live together as a community and take responsibility

for running their own lives.

Yes, we've all heard how voting doesn't work, how the fix is in, how the questions put before the public are but a fraction of the spectrum of what society should be hoping for and demanding. All of a sudden, the lout on the next barstool will get serious and political. He will stare into his drink and intone a few bars of cynical sophistry. Despite the fact that he pays the taxes and follows the laws, he exempts himself from living a public life. Walking over to the post office and filling out a registration card imposes too a great moral strain upon his precious and revolutionary soul. The lout isn't really reasoning, but attempting to pass off an excuse as an idea, all to maintain a pose. We are so revolted by the contradictions writhing inside this person that we flee to the bathroom, only to see his face staring back at us from above the sink.

It is too easy to shrink in the face of power, too easy to treat bad leaders like bad weather: inevitable, unpredictable, and unalterable. This is the con. It will cease to be the case the moment we stop believing in it.

On November 4, the city will choose the next mayor of Philadelphia. Four years ago, the first race between Mayor John F. Street and Sam Katz was decided by 9,447 votes, just over 2 percent of the total number cast. This newspaper alone will reach at least six times that number of people before the election.

Senator Rick Santorum & the Right to Privacy

Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum's comments to The Associated Press on April 7 equating the right of homosexuals to make love in the privacy of their own home with having the right to commit incest and polygamy are an outrage and a betrayal of all the essential theses that define American life. Santorum failed to understand that his purpose as a public servant is to carry our beliefs into government, not impose his morality on us all through government. Lost in the uproar surrounding his comments, though, was the far darker and more chilling logic he employed to arrive at his position: that the right to privacy does not exist in the Constitution, and is not basic to American liberty. This is a frightening claim from someone elected both to defend and to participate in a free society. And Santorum, it must be noted, is not asleep at his desk; he is the third-ranking member of the Senate's majority and has significant influence on what the Senate does with its time.

"[The] right to privacy... doesn't exist, in my opinion, in the United States Constitution...[it] was created in a law that set forth a (ban on) rights to limit individual passions. And I don't agree with that," said Santorum in the interview. The Senator was most likely referring to the U.S. Supreme Court's 1965 decision in *Griswold v. Connecticut* and its 1973 decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which are considered benchmark deci-

sions supporting privacy rights. What Santorum chooses to ignore (or perhaps simply does not know) is that for the roughly two hundred years of American legal theory prior to these cases, the right to privacy was considered so self-evident that it was termed "sacred", and those were the years when our nation's legal consciousness was secure in its secularism. Privacy, in fact, is basic to American legal freedom; this idea found its most eloquent articulation in an 1890 essay by Samuel D. Warren and Louis Brandeis, who defined privacy as the "right to be let alone."

Then there's the Constitution's Ninth Amendment:

"The enumeration in the Constitution of certain rights shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people."

As evidenced by our dauphin-president, George W. Bush, our attorney general, John Ashcroft, and now Santorum, religious zealotry is overtaking our ostensibly secular government slowly and surely. It preys on the people who fear what they don't understand, and weakens their resolve to determine their own beliefs in a time of great crisis in the world.

Most adult Americans of sound mind know right from wrong and don't need a religion or a senator in a bishop's collar to tell them what it is. This isn't Iran. We don't want or need the state to interfere with our innermost beliefs.

CORRECTIONS

An unsigned brief published in Issue Six, Page One, concerning Ed Goppelt's public records website, said his website was located at <http://www.hallwatch.com>, which is not the case. In fact, Ed Goppelt's website is located at <http://www.hallwatch.org>. THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT regrets the error.

A piece of artwork published in Issue Seven, Page Nine, on the bottom edge of the page, in the middle, without a title, was credited to Rich Menet, who did not create the artwork. In fact, the work was created by Juan Dimida. The title of the work is "Crazy Rocket TV Man."

A story published in Issue Four, Pages One and Ten, by Richard Charles, referred to an artist named "Tom Lessner," a misspelling. In fact, Mr. Lessner's first name is spelled "Thom." THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT regrets the error.

We intend THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT to be a permanent and accurate record of fact. If you are aware of any error in these pages, please notify the Publisher via telephone at 215-351-0777 without delay.

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HARD NEWS: We are not presently accepting unsolicited hard news writing or hard news pitches. If you know of something newsworthy that you would like to see us write about, send an email to tips@phindie.com.

ESSAYS, REPORTS, EXPERIMENTS & MISCELLANY: Write up a short proposal containing one or more article ideas and email it to writers@phindie.com, or mail it to the address on the left. Please include your contact information, your resume, and a sample of your work. The resume can be as short as three lines, and the sample does not need to have been published.

FICTION: We welcome unsolicited fiction. Email fiction@phindie.com, or mail your submission to the address on the left. Mark the envelope to the attention of Loren Hunt, Senior Editor.

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LETTERS: THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT loves to get letters from its readers on any subject. Send your letter to editors@phindie.com or mail it to the address on the left.

GENERALLY: Here are some rough guidelines, which you should feel free to ignore if circumstances give you a reason to do so. We generally like to run: Writing that could never appear anywhere else. Writing that shows evidence of serious effort and research. Writing that is concerned with particular events, persons and places. Writing that poses a challenge in terms of categorization and presentation. Writing that does not take place in and is not concerned with present-day Center City Philadelphia. Reviews of works, items or experiences that are difficult to obtain. Writing that does not remind us in content or form of stuff we've already run. Writing from abroad. Writing that assumes a clear and consistent attitude towards its subject. Writing about any worthy subject that has never before been written about.

PLEASE BE PATIENT WITH US: We are perpetually behind. If you're mad, please write us an email and say so.

CIRCULATION INFORMATION

If you are interested in carrying THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT in your store, please send an email to circ@phindie.com or telephone 215-351-0777. You will find that our newspaper is of the highest quality and that our terms are just.

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Get from our fleet of news-boxes

ELSEWHERE. Price: One Dollar

HARBOR: ABBY'S BOOKCASE - 291 County Line Road
 HARBOR: MAIN STREET RECORDS - 11 S. York Road
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 DOYLESTOWN: Siren Records - 25 W. State
 NEW HOPE: FARLEY'S BOOKSHOP - 44 S. Main

NEW YORK CITY & WASHINGTON D.C.

We presently engage in limited free distribution in New York City and Washington D.C. If you know of a store in either city that would like to become one of our distributors, please get in touch. If you live in either city and would like to help us with national circulation, please get in touch.

ADVERTISING INFORMATION

We sell ads. For a media kit, send an email to ads@phindie.com.

SUMMER ASSOCIATES WANTED

Summer is a busy time. We could use some help. We're looking for two Summer Associates to put in between twenty hours and sixty hours a week from June through August. This is an unpaid position.

WHAT YOU'LL BE DOING: In the beginning, you'll spend about half of your time at the library doing independent research projects. The other half of the job is moving around the city, collecting documents, checks, news items and hanging out at the post office, which is a way to say running errands.

WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR: Associates who ride bikes. Associates who own laptops. Associates who know stuff about computers. Associates who do not generally apply for summer work, or who only do so belatedly and half-heartedly, because they like having fun in the summertime. None of these are prerequisites. Senior Editor Loren Hunt, for example, does not ride a bike nor does she ever intend to.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO: Write us a letter, 300 words or less, describing why you'd be good for the job and why it would be good for you. Also send a copy of this issue, with each typographical error marked in red ink. Add a resume and/or a writing sample if you feel like it. Mail all of this to the above address. Include your email and telephone contact information.

DEADLINES: Get your stuff to us by May 31.



TRADING SECURITIES

Madison, Wisconsin—There's a sign in this airport, right next to the security checkpoints, that makes me laugh at the worst possible moment. I should add that I am not the kind of person who finds air travel amusing. I am a nervous traveler. I am the kind of person who composes ad hoc obituaries for myself and for my fellow passengers whenever the plane encounters a little turbulence.

So my laughter, far from a flippant, sneering, ironic chuckle directed at the more absurd elements of Americana, is, in fact, like the smile of certain monkeys, a symptom of fear. Yet for all that, it is still laughter, the laughter of a man who is waiting in line, alone, at a security check-point. But it is worse than that: I am laughing at the sign that offers pictorial representations of all the things you are not supposed to carry on the plane.

One of things you are not allowed to carry aboard the plane is a bomb. It is the bomb that makes me laugh. There's nothing funny to me about the notion of someone bringing a bomb on my flight. What's funny is the picture of the bomb. It must have been agreed that pictures of prohibited items were better than words, so that the potential terrorist is left without the convenient excuse of being unable to read English. But it must have been a challenge for the artist who was commissioned to depict the idea of "bomb," since the general public doesn't really know what bombs look like anymore. The solution of the sign-maker was a pictogram showing a black bowling ball with a long fuse coming out the top.

It is, in fact, a giant, bulky cherry bomb, filled with gunpowder, of the type that anarchists in New York City might have thrown at bank windows at the turn of the 19th Century. This is a bomb like the ones in the boardgame Stratego. You get a mental image of the type of person who would carry such a weapon, the Stratego spy character, or an angry, young fiend out of Dostoyevsky with disheveled clothing and a monocle. The bomb would be a large bulge hidden under his long black trenchcoat. I imagine him looking like the mustachioed ruffian played by Daniel Day Lewis in *Gangs of New York*.

The effect is cartoonish, and another inevitable, horrible association that comes to mind is *Wile E. Coyote*. It's an ACME bomb, the kind of device that you would see Coyote lighting up, and then, realizing that he has made some fatal miscalculation, frantically trying to blow out before the fuse burned down to the powder. Except that you know he will accidentally blow himself up, appearing all singed and droopy afterwards.

This is when I start to laugh. It seems like a cruel joke at the expense of the passengers. They must know that such bombs have fallen out of favor. I get a giddy notion to inform the security personnel that I doubt whether the things are even available anymore. Of course, the problem is that I can't tell anyone what I'm laughing about. Try explaining all this to one of these new Federal airport security agents, and just see how funny they think it is.

At this point, me and the Sikh guy get hauled out of line for a few extra questions, a few waves of that magic little wand in which we trust so much.

J.M. TYREE
 New York City

TWO VIGNETTES

II. Wynnewood Lanes, and eight PM doesn't stop the pins from falling like clock strokes. Simultaneously, the monitors blitz from neon pink frames to a stern face, standing and passive. Warming their hands by the ball return rack, three of a foursome stare up at the muted screen a little cognizant of life off the hardwood, a little more so of their scores.

III. Diplomacy failed when my dog had to scurry beneath our couch to silence the bombers from Willow Grove Air Base, droning out a perfect Montgomery County night.

DAVE ALLF

WE ARE BLUSHING

To the Editors:
 I just finished reading this intelligent and

thoughtful newspaper. I had hoped you would produce a newspaper that would serve as I.F. Stone's Weekly did. He provided the news that the regular newspapers never or rarely mentioned. Well, you've surpassed even that hope of mine. Keep up the good work! We need to have a newspaper devoted to all the news that's not "fit to print" in the regular newspapers.

Thank you,
 JOAN SAGE

INVITATION TO A PARTY

Friends and family, if you haven't been to one of my events...this is the one you need to attend...The space is HOT, RAIZ and the band are primed and ready, the week has been too long, today is a Friday, and the weather is damn near perfect. So please come show your love and support.

After a truly remarkable debut in the sold out show at "Sex And The City" actor, Mr. Big's Cutting Room, and a "Soul Sample Artist" cameo performance for MTV at New York's star studded talent incubator Joe's Pub... ladies and gents...it is simply a banging show, you have my word on it, and you know that I wouldn't be supporting the cause otherwise... So come out tonight, be prepared to chill, drink, dance, pre-party and simply enjoy the first of many summer season Friday nights in the City we all love to love.

NII-AMA AKUETE
 Structured Credit Products & ICM
 J.P. Morgan Securities Inc.
 270 Park Avenue, 10th/fl
 New York, NY 10017

BALD LIES

Dear Avacor,

As a person dealing with hair loss, I have used your product and it is helpful. However, I am writing about something more important. Recently, I was forwarded an article by a friend of mine, who pointed out some comments made by Rush Limbaugh regarding the patriotism of Senator John Kerry, who is a Viet Nam veteran, and people protesting the possible war on Iraq. The reason I am upset about these comments is because my father not only came home from Viet Nam with no legs, he traveled to DC this weekend and marched (well, rolled is probably a better word) against the war. Rush's comments made Dad very upset for many reasons, not the least of which is that Rush himself never served in the military, but got a deferment because of a pimple on his butt! And they made me upset too.

I will not be using your product anymore until Rush Limbaugh is off the air. I do not want to give my hard earned money to a company that pays for this man to spew his hateful gibberish. If that means I lose more hair, then so be it!

Please tell me what you intend to do.

BRENDAN SKWIRE

To: "Brendan Skwire"

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

Sorry that you have confused Avacor with Mr. Limbaugh's message whatever it is. Apparently you also feel that we are supporting him when in fact we are not. Avacor is the best hair re-growth product in the world today. We are merely trying to reach large listening audiences and tell them about our product, no more no less. Please don't associate a fool with our excellent product.

Sincerely,
 CUSTER

To: Custer

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

I understand that Rush does not speak for Avacor, but as an advertiser on the show, your advertising dollars help fund his program. There are many other shows you could sponsor that would reach a large listening audience, like Don Imus, Howard Stern, or Randi Rhoads. Why spend them on someone you quite correctly label "a fool"?

I'm sorry: no more Avacor for me until you're no longer sponsoring Limbaugh. Bald spot be damned!

BRENDAN SKWIRE

To: "Brendan Skwire"

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

Brendan you have the right to be bald or anything you want. You also have the right to

ignore him completely. I don't understand why you don't. Frankly, I would and I do so on a daily basis.

CUSTER

To: Custer
 Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads
 Sorry for being so tenacious about this CSGX, but your response made me think of an old poem written during World War 2. I forget the author's name, and I have to paraphrase his words. It's the one that goes "First they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't Jewish. Then they came for the gypsies, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a gypsy. Then they came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for me, and by that time, there was no one left to speak up for me." Or something like that. I would prefer to ignore Rush too, but I think it is better to speak up. Especially when I think of my dad in his wheelchair, and this bullfooning telling millions of listeners that people like my dad (who as a veteran I think has an unimpeachable platform from which to speak against going to war) are anti-American, not patriotic, etc. He even used the word "fascist!"

Now if this was 6th grade, this is where I'd go up to the big mouth and knock his block off. I'm sure you'd do the same. But I'm a grownup, and so I have to take it up with the people that advertise on the program. That's why I'm saying something. Please reconsider, and run your ads on someone else's show.

I apologize if I come off as a ball-buster, but I really feel strongly about this. Quite frankly, I'd rather spend my money on Avacor than that lousy Rogaine shampoo which makes my head itch and doesn't work half as well! But I can't support a company that helps Rush stay on the air.

Once again, sorry if I come off as tenacious. Stupid principles...

BRENDAN SKWIRE

To: "Brendan Skwire"

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

Brendan, it's necessary to have principles. I still have 2 friends MIA from Viet Nam as well. Mr. Limbaugh is a large excretory opening and has a recto-cranial fistula, so basically nothing that comes out of his mouth won't stink. Avacor grew my hair back. I have expressed my contempt for him and our policy of advertising on his show to the company that I work for, on more than 1 occasion, and I thought that you should know this as well.

Sincerely,
 CUSTER

To: CUSTER

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

Thanks Custer, I really appreciate your response. And my father will as well. I never went to VN (too young, obviously) but I know through family and friends what it was like, and I have the utmost respect for veterans (of that conflict and every other one too): it takes real balls to go and risk your life for your country). I am going to show your comments to my father if that's OK with you.

Is there a better person for me to write to at Avacor where I could express my disappointment? Or are you the unlucky guy who has to deal with disgruntled customers? Please feel free to forward my previous emails to Avacor's upper management.

Thanks a lot, and take care. I appreciate your forthrightness and honesty with me; that says a lot about you and your company. I will continue to hope that you withdraw your ads from Rush's show, but please understand I harbor no ill will toward Avacor, which helped me manage my hair loss too.

Best wishes,
 BRENDAN

To: "Brendan Skwire"

Subject: RE: Avacor's Rush Limbaugh ads

Brendan, I have relayed your concerns to the company. And yes, I am the unfortunate one who initially deals with unhappy people. There is nothing else that I can personally do for you other than make sure that the company knows that it has very upset people on their hands. War is always easier for the politicians. I think every one of them should be in one before they earn the right to vote for one—especially if we were not attacked or directly threatened first.

Sincerely,
 CUSTER

collections

A Visit to the Mütter Museum

BY BERNARD VAUGHAN

Entering the Mütter Museum is like slowing down to look at a car accident. Only, you don't see a single tragedy caused by weather or human misjudgment, but, rather, a multitude of medical calamities that manifest themselves—the microscopic enemies of medicine—in all manner of painful, humiliating and, more often than not, deadly afflictions and deformities.

The two-level museum opened in 1863, five years after Dr. Thomas Dent Mütter retired as a Professor of Surgery at Jefferson Medical College. Over his long career (he got his MD from the University of Pennsylvania in 1811), Mütter made repeated professional trips to Europe, where he collected over 2,000 medical specimens. Upon retirement, he donated these and \$30,000 to the College of Physicians, in Philadelphia, which then named the museum in his honor. It is an eye-opening testament to medical history, particularly developments of the 19th and early 20th century.

The upper level shows numerous wax models depicting the effects of rare skin diseases, including the head of Madame Dimanche, or "Widow Sunday," an 18th century Parisian with an upside down, ten-inch "human horn" growing out of her forehead (think of a unicorn's horn pointing downward). Near that, next to shelves of skulls ravaged by the acidic effects of syphilis, lies the body of the "Soap Lady," a woman who died of yellow fever in 1792 and whose body—by a process involving nitrogenous tissue, ammonia and fat—turned to adipocere, or soap.

Old dental kits, bloodletting cups, penile syringes and other frightening surgical equipment are on display. The entire Norman Rockwell-like office of Dr. Philip Gordon, a Philadelphia physician in the early 20th century, is preserved, including his examination table, surgical instruments and black leather bag for house calls.

A section called "When the President is Patient" details the evolution of White House physicians—thus reflecting the changing practice of American medicine—and includes a jaw tumor removed from Grover Cleveland in 1893, a portion of John Wilkes Booth's vertebrae and brain tissue from Charles Guiteau, assassin of James Garfield.

One hundred thirty-nine skulls from the Viennese anatomist James Hyrtl cover almost an entire wall. Classifications by sex (mostly male), religious and ethnic group, occupation and cause of death (many suicides and criminals) offer faint glimpses into the life of each: "Ladislav Pal, Magyar of Transylvania. Reformist, guerrilla and deserter. Executed by hanging 1861." "Anton Mikschik, 17, Moravia. Shoemaker's apprentice. Suicide because of discovered theft." "Simon Juhren, 19, Linz, Upper Austria. Hanged himself because of unhappy love affair."

A staircase in the middle of the room to the lower level leads you to a tall, glass-enclosed case containing three skeletons: a normal-sized adult, a 7-foot-6-inch victim of

gigantism, and that of Mary Ashberry, a 3-foot-6-inch dwarf who died in labor in 1856. Turn around from that to see another glass-enclosed case, this one holding the 8-foot-4-inch stuffed colon of an otherwise skinny man who suffered from "aganglionic megacolon," a "congenital anomaly followed by habitual constipation which terminated fatally in the adult." A doctor's picture shows the naked, swollen-bellied subject, scratching his head—just as perplexed as any contemporary viewer.

Other specimens include dried skeletons complete with ligaments and veins, a plaster cast of the bodies of Chang and Eng Bunker (the original Siamese Twins), fetal skeletons ranging from four months to gestation and the Muntz collection of trephined skulls.

Besides these staples, the museum also shows temporary exhibitions. One currently traces the history of infectious diseases and explores the challenges posed by urbanization, emerging and reemerging infectious diseases and globalization.

Most recent is "One Man Died: Medical Adventures on the Lewis and Clark Trail." While the Lewis and Clark expedition West left from St. Louis in 1803, this exhibit stresses the true beginning to be Merriweather Lewis' earlier trip to Philadelphia to seek medical and scientific advice from the day's most prominent surgeons and scientists, so as to be better able to care for his expedition. Methods of caring for fevers, boils and venereal disease on the trail are described in detail, as is the crucial trading relationships developed with Native Americans along the way. Quotes from the diaries of various expeditionaries are printed on the walls, such as when Lewis delivered a speech to some Indians "expressive of our journey the works of our government, some advice to them and Directions how they were to conduct themselves...." Or after Lewis was mistakenly shot in the rear end while hunting: "I instantly supposed that Cruzatte had shot me in mistake for an elk as I was dressed in brown leather and he cannot see very well....I called out to him, damn you, you have shot me...."

This museum sobers the sense of mortality to the rationality of science—the frequently grotesque measures taken over time to probe our physical make-up. Seeing the human body stripped to its organic, mechanical wiring, and the possible results of that intricate construction not forming a cohesive, functioning universe of tendons and muscles, of organs and ligaments, your skin-in-turn gets thicker, and you detach yourself, appreciate your own body, perhaps feel lucky as you leave the scene and drive off.

Bernard Vaughan is a graduate student at Temple University.

MÜTTER MUSEUM
19 S. 22nd St.
Philadelphia, PA. 19103-3097
"One Man Died: Medical Adventures on the Lewis and Clark Trail" runs through February 2006.

So Sham Arc / Sew Shim Ark

Within the context of suppressing negative concepts:
scaling the local, imagining the liminal.

Destiny's tread detected through lexical selections of dread.
Tremors are registered, retracted.

Struggles tend to twitch the switches, condense and extend.
Phrase as fuse, ruse of arousal.

Invisible opposition of divisible positions, to quote Space Ghost Coast to Coast.
Put a paradox in a box, monitor Pandora from panopticon's top.

He was brought up in the service economy;
he spoke only in positives while assigning each segue's significance.

Grading visible resistance
or grabbing a preemptive reach around.

Sort of problematic in frustrated fragment,
sorting out this fragile totality.

Symptoms in motion:
culture of lockdown, cult of lockbox, cusp of lockjaw.

Slippage of emotion:
force dispersed across networked connections.

Call me priest-confessor, call me emissary-advisor.
Paint ball leagues are even now forming at a resort near you.

Organics of organizing revolt:
how to muster momentum, move from monolith to myth.

Step back to let one person out, get pushed from behind by another.
Massive attacks, my babies safe from harm.

Caught in the mosh of particulars:
Iron, Tin, Bronze,

Rock, Paper, Scissors.

Engineer an empire, coerce a coalition.
Beyond the Valley of the Shadow of the Dolls,

an era of the constant nomad, horizon lines in erasure.
Let's say metallic, let's say one lost decade,

let's say one last graze of the interface.
Making something like meaning, cobbling together the collapse of space.

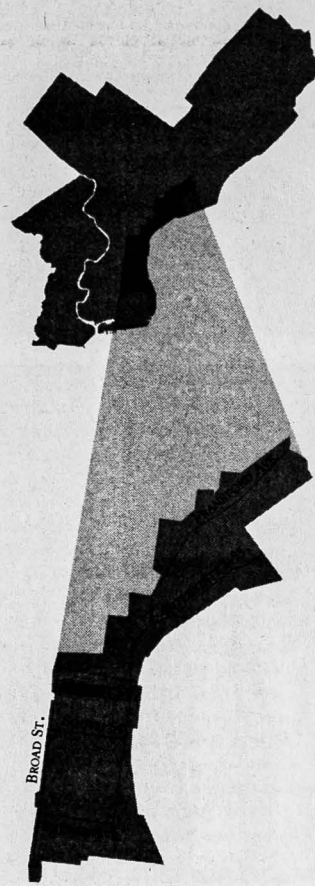
Sensing the socially saturated, decoding the candy coating.

—CHRIS MCCREARY

The First District runs along the Delaware River from South Philadelphia to North Philadelphia. The border on the west is defined by Broad Street from Oregon Avenue to Spring Garden Street, at which point it juts east to Sixth St. and continues north, cutting a jagged path just to the west of Frankford Ave.

The district includes Queen Village, Bella Vista, Society Hill, Old City Fishtown, Northern Liberties, and Kensington.

PHILADELPHIA'S



FIRST DISTRICT

DOING THE WAVE

Love, marginal love, I was making love
On the side, as it were,
On the berm at the bottom,
Between tugs. A tumbrel
Had brought us here at eight this morning,
Me and my widow.
My dulcet feather,
If we jump up and down together,
Like this, look!
We can make the floor shake.

Welcome!

For the last time: subtract
The rest of our life, give a fuck
Marry, die or lie on the street
During a thunderstorm in Baghdad,
Singapore, Lyons, or Bombay,
Where the barmaids are indifferent
To your beakless profile. Behind
That cement wall is your commissioned oil portrait.

Brace yourself for the post-coital
Turbulence of the coming flood
Here, son, there is no place
That can see you.

Film Noir

My old faces flicker beneath my fez
Scumbled in vine charcoal, then erased.
Once I was a whiskey stud,
A torch singer drowning in a bathtub,
A Franciscan monk buying rounds in a go-go bar.
Lake Wakefield, who left his wife,
I left my life to move to the next street.

—LINH DINH

Ouch Ouch

There is a razor
in the orchard here a sword
amidst the orchids there Kids are bloody
trying to catch mosquitos & the bees

—FRANK SHERLOCK

Fouled Form Stalls Anastasio Campaign

from FIRST DISTRICT, page 1

who founded Reasons to Stay, a citywide lobby for neighborhood quality-of-life issues. Then, Anastasio entered the race as an "independent Democrat," before finding himself courted by one of Fumo's biggest competitors in the business of politics, electrician's union leader John Dougherty. Anastasio traded in some of his outsider gloss in exchange for some much needed clout—Dougherty's endorsement and the election-day foot-soldiers that come with it.

Despite the support of this powerful figure whom Mayor John Street counts among his closest allies, Anastasio does not feel his status as an "independent Democrat" has been effected. "The only people that I answer to at the end of the day is the neighborhoods, with all due respect to my supporters," he said.

The worst morning for DiCicco probably came in February, when the *Philadelphia City Paper* ran a cover story on Reasons to Stay, with a wide-angle photo showing a rosy-faced Anastasio flanked by fellow group members. "We the People," read the headline of the story that reported the requisite "rumors" that Anastasio had plans to make a bid for DiCicco's job. But it would take only a simple form to change Anastasio from rising underdog to stubborn longshot.

In Pennsylvania, public officials and candidates are required to list the names of their employers, business interests, and real-estate holdings; in short, any and all sources of income. On March 10, Anastasio filed his Statement of Financial Interests form along with his nominating petition at the office of the County Board of Elections at City Hall. In a box instructing him to list "direct or indirect sources of income," Anastasio checked "none," when in fact he had worked this year for Josephs and had listed "administrative assistant" as his occupation on the same statement.

Enter Sarah DeRose. On March 18, she filed an objection in Common Pleas Court, seeking to strike Anastasio's name from the ballot.

Also on March 18, signed and dated an amended form. On this form he named the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as sources of income. However, he was told that this new form, filed after the March 11 deadline, was unacceptable, he said. He then left this amended form with the Department of Records.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court has now concurred in a 4-3 ruling that Anastasio's

omission was a "fatal defect" that should keep his name off the ballot.

Now, Anastasio will have to fight an uphill battle to convince First District Democrats to write in his name on the May 20 ballot, or leave the party and run as an independent candidate in November, an option Anastasio has not ruled out.

Back to 1999. DeRose succeeded in getting the nominating petition of another DiCicco challenger, John H. Morley Jr., thrown out on the basis of invalid signatures. In court, Morley argued that although DeRose was Democrat registered in the First District, and hence legally qualified to contest his nomination, she was not the "real party in interest" for the case, but was in fact acting for DiCicco's patron, Fumo.

Morley, who is planning a run against Fumo for the First Senatorial District, maintains this claim today. DeRose testified in court that she was a volunteer for the Democratic Party in the Second Ward and that she saw Morley's nominating petition "in an office at 1208 Tasker St.," according to the court transcripts. That happens to be the address of one of Fumo's three district offices.

Teti, DeRose's attorney, logged more than fifteen years working in the City Solicitor's office. He has also served as general counsel for the Philadelphia Police Department and the Philadelphia Election Commission. DiCicco and one of his aides would neither confirm nor deny that the councilman played a role in DeRose's complaint and referred all questions to Teti.

"She [DeRose] brought [the case] to me. How she found out about it I don't know," Teti said. "All this stuff about who's behind what and who's who. What the hell difference does it make? Any registered voter in the district has the right to object to a nominating petition because it's defective."

DiCicco, asked for comment, gave only a prepared statement.

"The law is the law. The courts have removed my former opponent from the ballot," he said.

Anastasio admits he made a mistake. Having never run for office before, he said, he misunderstood the form and committed a clerical error. He said that the form is redundant, as it asks for "Occupation or Profession" in one box and "Direct or Indirect Sources of Income" in another. He said he interpreted the second box as asking for supplemental income. Judge Pamela Dembe, who heard DeRose's case

against Anastasio in Common Pleas Court, stated in her opinion that "the Court does not find that Mr. Anastasio acted with any fraudulent intent."

The Anastasio campaign, in a March 25 press release, described the mistake as a matter of "putting a check mark in a small box instead of listing the six words 'City of Philadelphia' and 'State of Pennsylvania'" on a disclosure statement, somewhat specious logic for a man attempting to secure a job managing a nuanced formal language—the laws of the nation's fifth largest city. Should Anastasio prevail, he will spend much of his term understanding and filling out forms on behalf of an entire district, and it is in that district's interest that they be complete and correct.

DiCicco, however, is not exactly an expert with the forms himself. On his own Statement of Financial Interests form from 1999, an election year, DiCicco failed to list the City of Philadelphia as one of his sources of income, according to a copy of the form examined by THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT. In fact, DiCicco was drawing \$80,000 a year in salary as a councilman at the time. This omission didn't keep him off the ballot, because neither DeRose nor any other registered voter from the First District saw fit to take the matter to the courts. DiCicco also failed to list the City of Philadelphia as a source of income on his Statement of Financial Interest form from 2002.

"There's a lot of other folks who screwed this up in the past" said Anastasio, who has circulated DiCicco's old Statement of Financial Interests forms at community meetings and who keeps copies at his campaign office.

Frederick L. Voigt, executive director of the Committee of Seventy, a not-for-profit election watchdog organization, said the legal requirements for getting on the City Council ballot are fair.

"The system works fine," Voigt said in an interview. "It's reasonable. It's not so onerous as to preclude people from getting on the ballot, but it prevents frivolous candidates from cluttering the ballot up, which they used to do."

Fumo helped the Committee of Seventy win a \$15,000 state grant in 1999 and more than a third of that money went toward Voigt's \$102,600 salary, the *Philadelphia City Paper* reported.

Richard Charles is Senior Editor at THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

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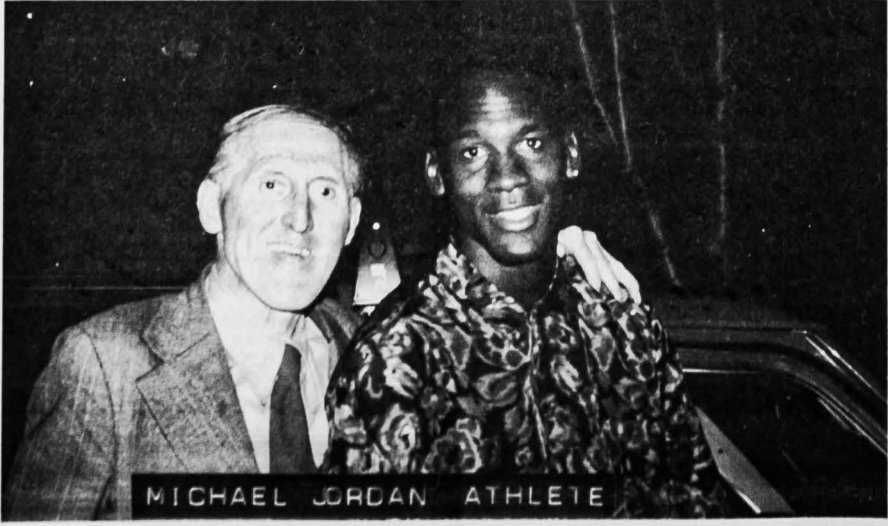
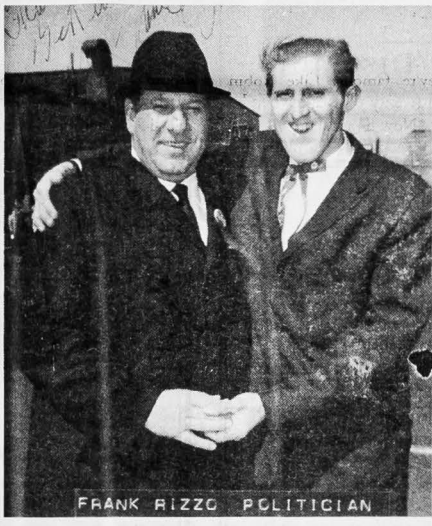
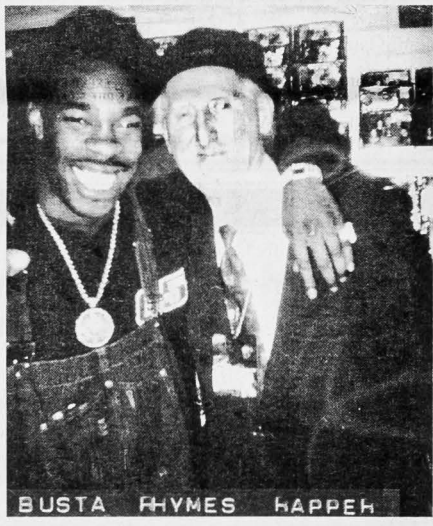
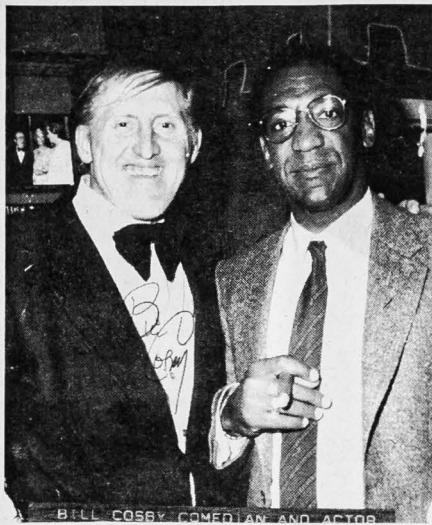
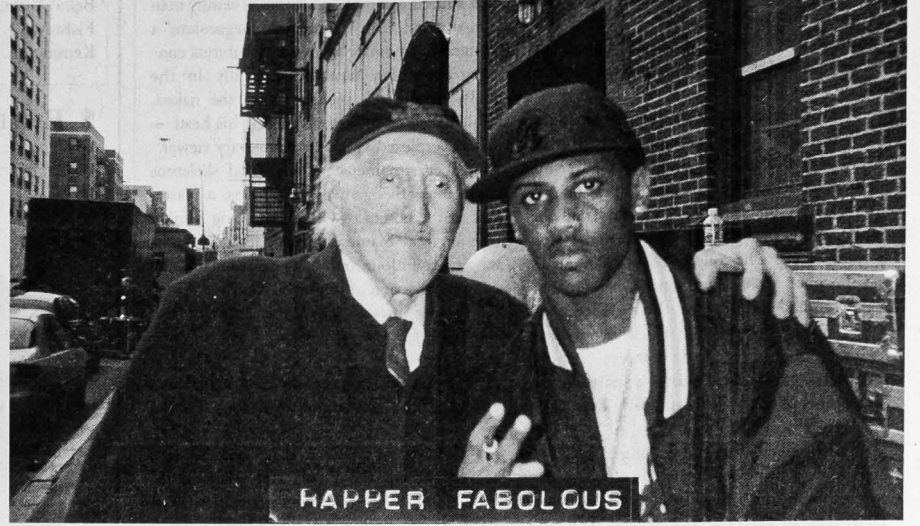
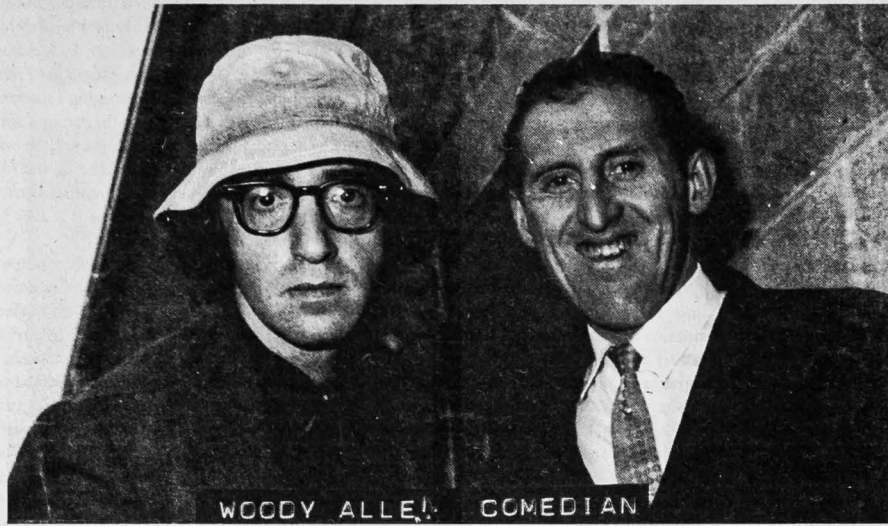
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A JOURNAL OF URBAN PARTICULARS





CHARLES VAITIKAITIS PHOTOGRAPHER

BY ANTHONY TIZIANA

Some people spend their free time fist fighting with rival street gangs, or shooting up junk, or just stirring up riff-raff, but not sixty-five year-old Charlie Vaitikaitis. As a young man living on Morris Street in South Philadelphia, Charlie decided to avoid such behavior by taking up photography as a hobby. Forty years later, after stints living in Delaware and New Jersey, Charlie is living in the same house on Morris Street, and his photography has grown into much more than a hobby.

Never completing high school, Charlie worked as a janitor in a series of factories, and with them came a limited amount of leisure time. While most of his friends and co-workers spent their time drinking in pubs, Charlie channeled his energy into pursuing and photographing people of notoriety. Even today Charlie will tell you, "It keeps me off the streets. I don't look for trouble, I don't find trouble." After decades of neither looking for nor finding trouble on Philadelphia's inviting streets, Charlie has compiled extensive scrapbooks containing thousands of photos of him alongside various celebrities.

Now, Charlie will be the first to point out that he is not a photographer in the traditional sense; rather, he is more of a star-smitten shutterbug with a straightforward, documentary style. Generally speaking, Charlie takes assisted self-portraits in the presence of stars with the help of strangers or his childhood friend and fellow star-searching enthusiast, Eddie Cowgill. Toting only a point and shoot Vivitar camera and a few extra rolls of 35mm film, Charlie does not fool around with fancy pants shutter-speeds and apertures. His photographs show no concern for composition and other extraneous elements that his star-photo-

graphing contemporaries, like Annie Liebowitz, spend years perfecting. Charlie's focus is strictly on the subjects, and nothing more. There is absolutely no attempt at digging beneath artificial public personas because that is exactly what he wants to capture. Simply put, Charlie takes these pictures because he adores famous people.

Charlie's collection started quite innocently when a crush on the lovely Jayne Mansfield led a twenty-four year-old Charlie to the back exit of the Camden County Playhouse where she was performing. His intention was to take her picture, and he did, thus freezing her vivacious image in time and extending the short moment of their meeting far longer than reality permitted. When Charlie began flaunting his newly acquired photo, suspicious friends doubted its authenticity, pointing out that anyone could have taken the shot. Later, as he took more photographs, Charlie began to include himself in the shot to prove that he did indeed come within close proximity to the stars. It was from that point on—by way of the coat tails of the famous—that Charlie started on the road to moderate local fame.

Over the years, Charlie started to cultivate his own photographic persona; bow ties, suit jackets, and sometimes a hat.

"I didn't have a tie on," when taking the Mansfield photo, he explained. "I never bought ties. I just wore shirts. I thought a picture was a picture. But then, I realized that everyone in the pictures was dressed up, so I got dressed up too. I started buying fancy bow ties at thrift stores."

I met Charlie V. (the "V" is short for "Victory") at the Snow White Diner at Second and Market streets one inclement day for a look at his scrapbooks. Charlie arrived

with a warm demeanor, carrying a black leather briefcase bulging with books of photos. This particular day he was dressed casually in a black coat, the top button of his collared shirt undone, his trademark bow tie absent, and bunches of white hairs jutting out from beneath a Billy Joel tour cap.

Charlie was headed up to New York to shoot some new photos. His pockets were filled with his standard gear: rolls of 35mm film, spare AA batteries, a plastic comb, a small blue pin marked "PRESS," and two bow ties. If Charlie sees two stars during one New York trip, he likes his pictures to show him wearing a different tie with each star.

His eagerness to show me his photographs was only exceeded by his eagerness to order and quickly consume a bowl of split-pea soup. With the matter of introductions and eating warm soup out of the way, Charlie and I started to wade through the snapshots.

First was a recent photo of Charlie with talk show host Conan O'Brien; in the photo, Charlie's angular smile and lazy Sartrean stare signified subtle excitement. When I looked up from the binder, I was met with a similar facial expression—a content smile tugging the corners of his mouth, acknowledging my interest in the photo. At his insistence, I continued to peruse the tattered binder of 8 x 10 prints.

It took little time to realize that what I was looking through was less an amateur photographer's scrapbook and more a comprehensive catalogue of pop culture icons dating from the early sixties to the present. There was Charlie next to John Lennon, Tennessee Williams, Muhammad Ali, Elizabeth Taylor, Julie Newmar, Ed Sullivan, Buddy Hackett, Kurt Cobain, Carroll O'Connor, Farrah Fawcett, Michael Jordan, Elvis Presley, Bill Gates, Tom Bosley, Frank Sinatra, Bruce Springsteen, George Bush (both of them), Woody Allen, Oprah Winfrey, John Wayne, Michael Jackson, Mamma Cass, Neil Armstrong, James Brown, and too many others to list.

He also takes many photographs of the yet-to-be, soon-to-be, and may-never-be famous, just in case.

"I got 'em when they were nobody," he told me, "and now they're famous. Like Robin Williams. I got him twenty years ago when he was just a comedian. Now he's a star."

While Charlie does not claim to have the power to create stars, he will note, quite correctly, that almost every one of today's stars passed through his viewfinder on the way up.

"Davey Jones. Mickey Dolenz. They made the big time. The 'V' means 'Victory.' Like I brought 'em good luck. A lot of people say I made Michael Jackson lucky, that I made him famous. I tell the stars that I can do it for them, too. Then they're like, 'We gotta take a picture with you.'"

In each photo, Charlie's expression maintains a constant level of intense enthusiasm, while celebrities offer smiles with varying degrees of polite engagement.

In following with the popular assumption that folks on the television are far more interesting than regular people, I prodded Charlie to dazzle me with stories and secrets about stars that only insiders, like writers for tabloids, would know. Charlie then proceeded to point to each picture saying things like, "Oh him, yeah, Bon Jovi was nice," or "At first, Eddie Murphy didn't want to stop and let me take his picture. He's not so nice." The story-telling began to trace a similar theme, and it was clear that the few minutes shared while snapping photos allowed very little insight, beyond whether a star was nice or simply annoyed.

As we chatted about names, places, and dates, Charlie's photos caught the eye of a waitress named Margie. Charlie immediately asked, "You ever meet famous people?" She nodded and explained that she had once met a star named Billy Joel. The question was followed up quickly with a compliment on her pretty hair and eyes. After that, we all looked at the pictures; on occasion she would say, "Wow, you met so and so." Charlie just nodded with a sort of nonchalance that bordered on disinterest. And although I hoped to refrain from indulging Charlie in the type of exchange that was going on, I could not help myself, saying, "Yikes Charlie, you met James Brown, huh?" Let's face it, at one point in his life, Charlie's arm was wrapped around James Brown, which is more than I can say for myself. Charlie just sat contently and soaked up the mild astonishment like a sponge, remarking, "Yeah, I just seen him [James Brown] last week."

Several minutes later, Margie went back to her tables and I went back to flipping through the books. I casually asked Charlie if he'd like to be famous himself, to which he replied in a relaxed tone, "Oh, it's too late for that." I neither agreed nor disagreed, and instead focused on the pictures.

I stopped on a print of Charlie and rapper Busta Rhymes. Now, Charlie is certainly a cool

person, but I couldn't help but think of him as the rather un-extreme fellow who tried unsuccessfully to tag-a-long with Busta in certain Mountain Dew television commercials. I wondered if Charlie was motivated to follow Busta and take his picture because of an intense love for his lyrical prowess, or merely for the association with the fame that Busta symbolized. I asked Charlie how he felt about Busta Rhymes, to this he replied with a familiar grin, "I just get the pictures, I don't care. It doesn't really matter."

Somewhat puzzled, I looked down at the photos. "Well, do you like Marilyn Manson at least?" I asked, holding up a shot of them with tangled arms. The answer was no. The same was true for many of the more recent photos with the likes of LL Cool J, the band Cinderella, the Smashing Pumpkins, Cake, and Eve. Charlie went on to say, "I don't even care about stars these days." This statement begged for the question that I had wanted to ask, and I eventually did: "Charlie, why do you continue to take photos of people that you don't like, or even know for that matter?" This inquiry was answered simply, "It gives me something to do. It keeps me off the streets." I continued to peruse the binders, trying to disregard what seemed a glum statement.

As Charlie continued showing me pages and pages of his photographs, I realized that I was more interested in Charlie himself, his fascination with celebrity, his motives for capturing their images on film. I suspected that Charlie was not merely a jaded hobbyist, that the fun of it was less in the action of snapping a star's photo and more in the suspenseful situations preceding the shutter's click. After all, Charlie had managed to invade the personal space of heavily guarded celebrities countless times, and that in itself has to be exhilarating. I was intrigued, imagining the copious tales of magnificent capers and sneaky flim-flam behind each photo. In my head, I began to concoct a scenario in which Charlie and a friend dress up in rented bellboy costumes and, by using an elaborate system of winks and mustache-twirls, they manage to prance through hotel lobbies with tremendous ease, slipping past scores of bodyguards into the penthouse of a cinema star, then, after a believable lie (something about a terminal illness), the star would be left with no choice but to pose with Charlie in a photograph. As it turns out, I was wrong. The process is not existing in the least. As Charlie explained it, there is little trickery involved. The key is waiting.

Charlie's secret to meeting stars relies on a set routine. First, he works only two days a week at, ironically, Burn International Security Services, which provides him with a little pocket money and, more importantly, ample time to track down popular icons. Second, he buys the *New York Post* and carefully reads the section that lists every talk show guest in New York. Third, he bids farewell to his sister and stepfather (both of whom he shares a house with in South Philly and catches the Greyhound bus from Philadelphia to New York for a three to four day trip. Charlie's bus, dinner, and hotel are often paid for by Steve. Steve is an affluent friend and fellow photographer. Charlie is very protective of Steve. "I don't like to talk about him too much," Charlie said of Steve, his friend and patron. "He don't like nobody to recognize him."

Charlie then arrives and plans out which lobby to wander around in. Lastly, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., he waits; he patiently waits in lobbies of hotels and television studios in the hopes of seeing a star.

If he gets lucky, they show up and pose for pictures. If he doesn't get lucky, he's spent several hours of his day waiting in a hotel lobby. Charlie admits that time waiting in relation to the time actually spent in the presence of a star is immensely disproportionate. The trade-off seemed steep to me, but Charlie assured me that it is worth the wait when he adds another star to his book.

It was at that moment when Charlie's time-consuming hobby actually seemed to make sense to me. In one way or another, most people grasp for what lends meaning to life with the modest hope of encountering happiness a fraction of the time. I looked down at a photo of Charlie smiling beside a bloated Jerry Lewis and closed the binder, sipping what remained of my cold coffee.

Before I left the diner, I asked Charlie what he planned to do with the photo collection in the future. He offered a shrug, and told me what he does not plan to do; he has no intention of selling them or parting with them, that much is certain. When asked why, Charlie responded, "If I do that, then all my life stories are gone." On that note, I said goodbye and thanked him for spending his time with me.

Anthony Tiziana studies English at Temple University. He can be reached via email at tonytiz@hotmail.com.



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MASS SPECTROGRAPHY:

CHARLIE V. CHARTS THE STARS

Four decades of identical photographic encounters with hundreds of superstars, stars and would-be stars has enabled Charlie Vaitikaitis to compare personae and presence with the certainty of a scientist. Here, for the first time, are the famed astronomer's observations, the stories behind the stars:

WOODY ALLEN: He was nice. Nice enough to let me take his picture.

JERRY SEINFELD: He was really moody, like really shy.

BUSTA RHYMES: Really moody. Well, real nice, too. I met him on South Street. He said "Anyone who's got a picture with Michael Jackson is a good friend of mine."

WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLINTON: I got him on Ninth Street here in Philadelphia, while he was staying at the Warwick. He had a lot of security guys. Bill came over to me. I shook his hand over the barricade and got the first shot. Then later I got another one, because I wasn't sure the first one was going to come out. So I got two shots. He was staying at the Warwick.

MICHAEL JORDAN: He was coming out the door of Bookbinder's and I was waiting for him. A cook came out and got an autograph. The cook took my picture and Jordan ran into a Jeep.

JOHN TRAVOLTA: This was years ago, on 34th Street by the old convention center. Travolta was doing some kind of thing with a whole lot of girls. We snuck into an elevator to get the shot. That was a real hard one.

JOHN LENNON: I met him outside a sound-proof studio room on the second floor of the old channel six, WFIL near 46th and Market.

He asked for a donation for some kind of radio fund. I gave him five dollars.

BILL COSBY: I've met him about four or five times. Nice guy. I've met him at the Warwick Hotel, Bookbinder's, outside the Walnut Street Theater, and in Washington D.C. He was always nice.

FRANK RIZZO: Frank Rizzo was very nice. If I was trying to get into a party somewhere, he'd tell his bodyguards to let me in. He stuck up for me. One time an officer was trying to throw me off the street during the New Year's Day parade on Broad Street. I was just trying to take pictures of the parade. I told Rizzo about it. He was police commissioner at the time. He gave me his card said that if I ever had any more trouble, I should get the guy's badge number and call him, anytime I had a problem with officers. But I never liked to rat on cops anyway, so I never did nothing.

JAMES BROWN: He was alright. You gotta be fast to get a picture with him. Can't take your time.

EVE: That was on South Street. I was drinking coffee at Ishkabibble's. She comes in with a big fur coat and two big guys with cameras. They were from MTV. So I ended up on MTV for about five minutes. They showed it six times. People were telling me about it, saying they saw me on MTV.

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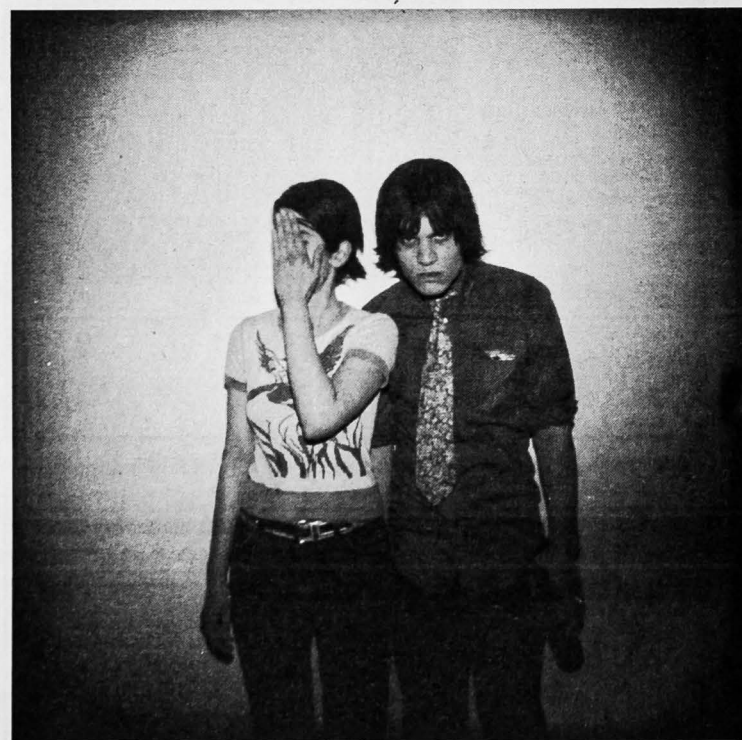
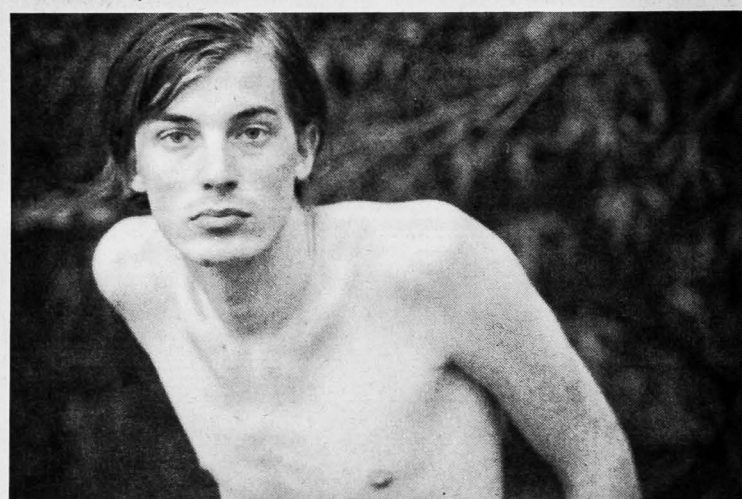
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CHRISTINA CAMPBELL

I married a mariner's bastard.
I loved the monsoons in his eyes.
I cracked with heart-stung static:
Damp Medea, willing and weeping
and witching—
Cursed by her own damp thighs.
I should have been mermaid, siren,
more myth than malady,
more insular than indignant.
Cruel Olympus,
the time has passed and gone
where I could have escaped as
fish, monster, albatross.
This is no moral,
this hardtack and scurvy,
this ill-spent adventure
in failure, frailty.

The backs of his hands, gnarled, scarred, veiny and bent, are covered with fine golden hairs that glint almost invisibly in the sun, consecrating the hell and high water such hands must have accomplished nine hundred times over. The fingers of these hands are blunt, strong, square, arthritic, shingled with black-ringed fingernails cut judiciously once a week, rising from thickets of dense hangnail. These are the hands that know me best.

His people, before they were American, were Celts, black Celts, and here, as proof, is his black bristling beard, strong white teeth, strong white arms on broad strong shoulders that lend themselves to romantic fantasies of bloody trysts in the woods with dangerous gods, under a murky black cloak and a murky red moon. The sinews of his back are knotted beyond hope of comfort or chiropractic, ropy and freckled, a ruined mattress with springs poking up everywhere. When I sit astride him, belly-down, on our marriage bed, and attempt to massage this vast expanse of self-punishment, the muscles warm beneath my hands but do not yield their knotty kinks, their close-coiled tensions, the unthinkable secrets of such a hard existence as he, the mariner's bastard, undoubtedly has.

Was he dark, light, good, evil, brave, cowardly, night, day, anything at all? Was he even really there? Such are questions a newlywed pearl-diver in a French bikini should abstain from asking herself on her honeymoon.

I am the millionaire's daughter. I married the mariner's bastard in May, with great pomp and circumstance. At our wedding, bagpipes moaned their guttural ecstasies amid nine hundred white gardenias, seventy bowers of night-blooming honeysuckle, a small cloud's worth of baby's breath, one hundred and thirty stems of Casablanca lilies, and in every odd corner, strange white orchids, starry and spiky and sexual, glowing weirdly, taken home later by guests as mementos.

I wore my mother's gown, nipped in on the seams by a crafty aunt, rippled and blurred by three hundred ruffles of ancient ecru lace from Belgium that depicted ghostly poppies with hypernatural accuracy, hairy stems and sticky cups almost leaping from their web of fiber and into my open hand. I carried more of those orchids. My lips were painted red and my unruly mass of hair was captured inside a net of freshwater pearls and fine silver wire. I was wondrously beautiful for the occasion.

My father bought the mariner's bastard a tuxedo, grudgingly and only after he discovered the mariner's bastard meant to rent one. The mariner's bastard wore it, grudgingly and only after he learned how much it had cost my father. He was dazzlingly handsome when we met at the altar, the bagpipes straining and wheezing in a labored effort to evoke our love for each other, our union, this millionaire's daughter and mariner's bastard who were only me and him.

The mariner's bastard's mother, the only person he had to invite, wore dusky cornflower blue and wept loudly throughout the entire ceremony, threatening to drown out the bagpipes. Before I walked down the aisle, I waited in a linoleum-tiled anteroom off the foyer of the cathedral. There was a small barred window in one corner and I stared at that contained frame of aching, startling May blue sky shot through with black lines for nearly an hour, stunned silent that anything could be so beautiful. My sister, the bridesmaid, sneaked illicit kisses from her boyfriend in the corner and ignored me. The walk down the aisle was a long, arduous trek through sandstorms and snowdrifts and sinkhole-ridden swamps, but at the end stood the mariner's bastard, pale beneath beard and freckles, but there, after all, agreeing most amiably to love me and no one else forever.

Afterwards, everyone drank champagne, my father crawled under one of the banquet tables for a nap, my sister overturned a flower arrangement squarely over her boyfriend's head, my friends from college postured and anguished and sighed over the motley crew of bachelors scrounged up for the event, my mother and the mariner's bastard's mother, quite ill-matched, wept and exchanged recipes,

fiction

THE MARINER'S BASTARD

AN EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL

BY LOREN HUNT

I sat still looking radiant, and the mariner's bastard kissed me on the cheek several times when he wasn't busy talking to one of my rich uncles. Later, everyone went to sleep in a nearby hotel and the mariner's bastard fucked me in the ass, something I'd made him wait a long time for. He fell asleep and I sat crouched over the toilet, waiting for the bleeding to stop so I could creep back into bed with my new husband and feel against mine his warm, salty skin.

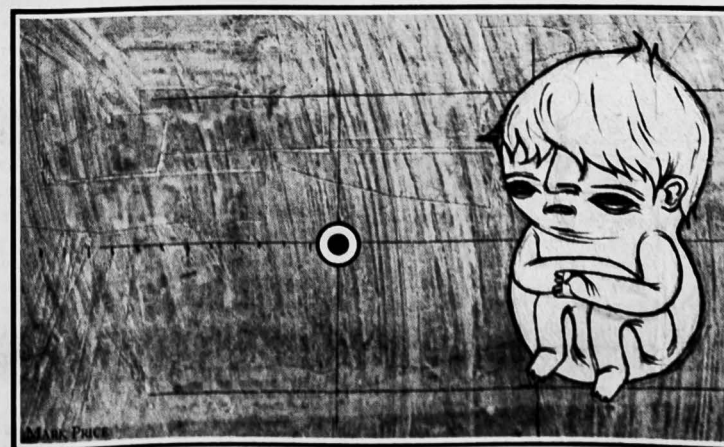
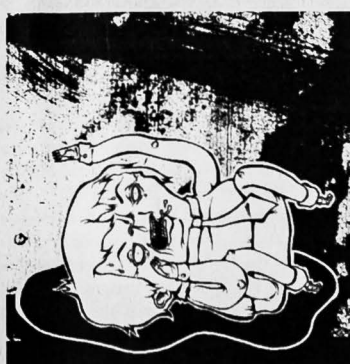
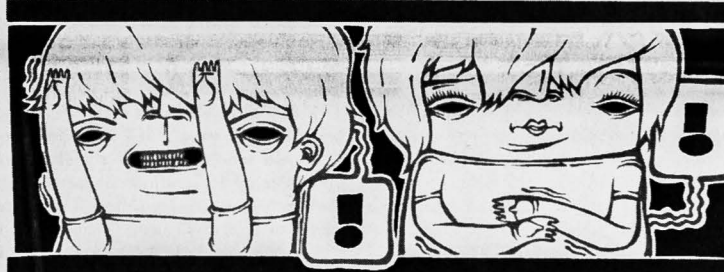
Our honeymoon involved a small yacht and one large, burly yacht captain named George Winterspoon. George Winterspoon was someone my father knew, a retired psychoanalyst who liked to play crusty old seadog and was not entirely unconvincing in the role. The mariner's bastard, of course, was not a mariner himself but a waiter. This is why we needed George Winterspoon, who was under strict instructions to leave us, the newlyweds, in peace. When my father told George Winterspoon this, there were several bawdy jokes and then we were all on our way: George Winterspoon, the mariner's bastard, and me, the mariner's bastard's young new wife.

The night before we left, the mariner's bastard and I had an awful fight in the gazebo. I had always loved the gazebo, from the time I

was a very small girl: The white iron scrolls showing chips in the paint that made the whole structure look organic, an odd flower that grew out of the lawn all on its own, the view of the orchard and the pool and elm-lined driveway, the rusty creak of the white iron swing inside. The mariner's bastard thought gazebos were stupid and bourgeois and pretentious. But he was also afraid of the sea.

He had been moping over something unmentionable all day, sighing long-sufferingly when I kissed his face and asked in my most patient voice what was the matter. "Nothing," he sighed, every time I asked, yet remained in bad spirits even when I left him alone with his coffee and newspaper to go to the gym for several hours with my mother. I asked him all day what was the matter, and each time he told me nothing was the matter. Then he asked if we could take a walk. I said of course. We walked to the gazebo, not speaking, but he didn't pull away when I took his hand and stroked it, like you would stroke a baby, simply for being so beautiful and new and themselves.

"Ari, I don't like the ocean," said the mariner's bastard, after we sat in silence for a long time. A cold panic seized my chest and I couldn't say anything for awhile. "Why not?" I asked.



"I just don't like it," he elaborated.
"Oh."

I thought back to a time, last October, when we spent an entire week camped out in a tent in the orchard. This was during the time we found each other so beautiful that we forgot to speak, just lay in the grass and stared, perfect chins propped on perfect hands, until our eyes were all neon and pupil, like two Siamese cats. The tent was an old army model of my father's that he kept around out of nostalgia, prehistoric and rugged, with barely enough room for the mariner's bastard and myself. When the sun came up, it heated the stiff canvas of the tent into an army-green sauna. We woke up slick and sticky, our eyes bleary and our heads muddled, scarcely able to breathe in that sort of humidity, and reached for each other, our limbs locking together, our faces swabbing sweat onto more sweat, our lust ravenous, furious, tyrannical. Later, when we opened the flaps and emerged, blinking and unsteady, from the tent, we spread the bedding on the grass, kicking stray fallen apples out of the way first. My father's clear view of the orchard from his office inside the house did not prevent us from lounging on the sweat-damp sleeping bags in the sun, wearing only our sunglasses.

The apples fell from the trees, crashing violently to the earth and bouncing several times before landing beside us on the blanket. This is how we didn't starve to death that week, the apples and the night my sister brought us Burger King because she was fighting with her boyfriend and my parents simultaneously and didn't want to eat alone. We talked about all sorts of things: Politics, our families, things we loved as children, the horrors of the modern world, the books we read for college courses, Deus Ex Machina, the soul's existence, the meaning of meaning, the history of thought, the possibility of true civilization, love at first sight, what happens after people die, the most disgusting thing in the universe, religious iconography, old ex boy- and girlfriends of ours, corporate greed, existential malaise, whether or not it was okay to match brown with black in the same outfit, the crippling fear of freedom, and which foods we would never eat, even at gunpoint. A lazy sun completed its daily trajectory through the glowing green screen of dusty apple leaves, the yellow-dappled apples ripening on the branches like strange jeweled parasites, spinning on the unlikelihood of stems not so spindly as they might have seemed, under different circumstances. At least twice a day I would melt beneath the excruciating softness of it all and tug at the mariner's bastard's hand, whispering, Look at all these apples, Howard, look at all these fucking apples!

The mariner's bastard would look at me, first startled, then bemused, patting my little hand, saying, Everything's going to be okay. Then the pat would turn into more of a caress, first my hand, then my wrist, then all over, his hands covering so much of me at once I was finally grateful for turning out so small and insubstantial. His tongue and mine were intimate like no other tongues had ever been before or would be ever again, our teeth clinked together so musically we mourned the fact that we had no recording devices in our little tent, our lips learned far superior ways of using the ancient language mashed up against each other. I kicked my legs in childish, frustrated desire, ripping off first his sunglasses and then my own, saying I want you, I want you, I want you to the mariner's bastard whose tongue on one of nipples could erase years of any loneliness or sorrow I had suffered before, whose cock grew harder between my thighs than coal in Superman's clenched fist. I swallowed him whole, losing myself in the simple physics of shared motion, teeth clamped over the piece of prone shoulderskin that yielded voluptuously beneath my carnivore's incisors and muffled my howls. The mariner's bastard churned and swooped and stung inside me, his orgasm a powerful fluttering flexing against my womb, almost comical until it grinned, panting. I wrote my name on his chest in elegant long-hand with a finger dipped in his semen that stiffened his chest hair into clumpy tufts that in no way resembled the letters I had labored over. When we both caught sight of the glittering golden gloss of my newly-slicked pubic hair in the sun, at the same instant, we were shocked senseless by its beauty, gazing in hushed awe until it was imperative for the kissing to commence anew. We laughed. We curled up and slept and got sunburned and laughed at that and ate apples and retired into the tent, not even an acre away from my father's fury, where we repeated the entire process over and over again until I got a kidney infection and he almost lost his job.

Loren Hunt is Senior Editor at THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

Art & Letters

SO WE BUILT A FENCE

My kitchen table has seen very many lots of things, and I am proud of it. When people come over, I will show them my table, and show it to them, but they do not know that they are being shown my table. I will just bring them to my table, and have them sit down, with me of course, and that is where we will do our most sincere talking from the bottom of our hearts. At least this is what I hope will happen, but I have not had any friends stop, by yet, but I know they will, and then I know just what I will do. But I am afraid we are about to have guests, and I am trying to get my mind off things I am very certainly worried about, and my table is good to think about.

My wife also likes our kitchen table, and she shines it with Lemon Pledge, which makes me alternately sad and happy. Let me tell you why it makes me both sad and happy: If I bought table-shining equipment, it would be of the very cheapest kind, for example, I might use an old t-shirt, that I had of course washed in the washer and dryer, before having applied it to my table. However, this is nothing compared to what my wife does, who is good at cleaning things. She buys the very most expensive, nicest cloths, which sometimes are neon green, or bright orange; she uses a new one every time. And she takes very much care and time, and I watch her, and think that she is sexy when she does this, but I usually do not tell her, for fear of disturbing the important task at hand. So I let her continue cleaning, and I try to purify my thoughts, by wondering if it is not just worth it to purchase less expensive, generic wood cleaner that you would perhaps find at a grocery store, on the lower shelves, priced at a fraction of the much larger price. But the table makes me happy, and it makes my wife happy to go to the store and buy expensive things than me. She likes to buy tissues with lotion already in them. But not me, I will buy the ones that are dry, and if I am in desperate need, sometimes I will just crumple a piece of paper towel really well, and use it, rather than spend all of my hard-earned dollars, on something I would throw away right after I used it. This is what my wife says, "You are crazy not to buy tissues, your nose is a good one, your momma made it for you." Then she will kiss my nose, and I will shoo her away, like a fly.

One of the things my table only usually sees is what me and my wife talk about, and do. Except that it can probably see out the kitchen window, because the reflection hits the table, and I know it can at least see the birds that fly by sometimes, though the birds come more rarely now that it is wintertime than they did at Eastertide. I would bet that my table saw my neighbor I would bet it was my neighbor, who came through my yard and stole my lawnchair that I sometimes sat on to read the newspaper, and think thoughts on. She was always jealous of my lawnchair, I know. But now I have a new lawnchair, and it will not get stolen, because I put a sign on it which much more clearly than the last says, "Do not take or your reputation will suffer in my eyes." My wife says that people will certainly think twice about stealing my chair, which I paid 25 dollars for, more than the last, at Walgreen's, where the cashier said he had one just like it, only his was black not green, and he liked that it kept the shape of his body even after he gets up. This is a factor I like in buying a chair, and I thanked the man for telling me the truth about what he thought, and I told him to keep the change, which was 90 cents, as a tip. Indeed, my chair has the capability to remember me after I have left it. My table probably remembers everything it has ever seen. It is oak, and smells like lemon, and not like rot, because it is a good wood, and a good wood color, and it is square, but technically not, because it had rounded edges, which my wife thinks would be especially good if we ever had children.

I believe my table appreciates that we talk about it right in front of it. Instead of talking about my neighbor, who is crazy, and I'm sure the table sees her doing crazy neighbor things, like call the cops all then time and tell them we are doing bad things which we most certainly are not, let me tell you, and they come to our house with a gun in their hand and say, "Do not do bad things." And they say words I don't know, and I say we do not do anything wrong. And it used to be worse, but now, they are used to our crazy neighbor being crazy, so they say, "We know she is a crazy neighbor, and cannot resist crazy neighborliness," so they do not assume the worst of us, but like us and come in sometimes and have tea. But I worry this is the wrong thing to be nice to us, and think they are spies, because they are still at our doors with guns, and I worry about guns a lot, when I worry about things at my table, or in my yard. But the police always say I have a nice table when I ask them what they think of it, and I think they have good taste.

I bet the table likes to hear itself praised endlessly, and while we do stop talking about it

fiction

CONVERSATIONS

A SHORT STORY

BY TIMOTHY TeBORDO

a lot of times, I am ashamed to admit, too often, we still provide it with enough to keep itself amused. Like once, I confronted my wife, and said that I heard her talking on the phone to a boy, and I knew it was a boy that she says things that only a boyfriend would hear from a girlfriend, that I should not be hearing from her to another boy. And she said, "He is only my internet boyfriend, and we only do internet boyfriend things with each other, and you are my real boyfriend, and I love doing real boyfriend things with you." And this is the point at which I began to feel like the table should no longer be watching, and neither should you, so we left, and I will not tell you what I thought, or what we did. I will say that I like that she likes to call me her boyfriend, and I did not catch her saying naughty things,

get home first, because she needs the mail there more than me, if you can believe it, which you should, because it is true. One time I forgot; she refused to open the mail for a whole day because it had sat too long in the mailbox and she wanted to pretend it was on the table the whole time.

And today, there is mail on the table, and it is bills, and a "Valu-pak" with very many nice coupons, which I like to receive because it has very many valuable savings, and it is like a free gift I receive every month, just for living in this house. When I wanted to take my wife out for her birthday to a nice restaurant, I knew I could find a coupon for the fancy restaurant we went to in that very envelope. She looked very pretty in her red dress at the restaurant we went to, even though red is not my favorite

had watched the episode in the waiting room of a hospital she was at. She was at the hospital not because she was sick like most people, I would have been there if she were, but because her job is to go to waiting rooms, all different kinds, and make sure that the magazines are put in order, and to see if people take them. She gets to see all different waiting rooms, and I am a little jealous of this. She is very good at her job, and when I tell her this, she smiles.

So if my friends wanted to know what I was waiting for, I would tell them, because it is very important that they know, and I think they should get one themselves, and wait for it just like I wait. The thing is the "Anti-Death Device" that I saw on the informative broadcast commercial. They were very adamant that this product was perhaps the most important object ever invented, and if I did not have it I would definitely die, even though they did not know when. And while they did not guarantee that this would prevent the inevitability of death, I am pretty sure my chances of this thing working for me are pretty good. For starters, I do not know that many people that died, and I do not visit cemeteries like I am someone who pretends to like them. Bob Euker said on my informational commercial that he would not go out of the house without his, and his word is his bond, because one time his son said he could beat him in arm-wrestling and he did, and Kevin was proud, and his dad Bob was proud of him, and did not try to hurt his son, which is the right thing to do, I know, because my dad never hurt me, and I know he is right.

And so, even though I did go out of the house, I knew for very certain that it was the wrong thing to do, unlike honorable Bob and my dad. So I went out, but not until making a lot of changes, like not eating so much raisins, which I believe I heard can kill you, and I wanted, and still want to be able to survive until I receive the very thing that could truly prevent me from bad things. And because I love my wife, it is a surprise of me that I bought her one too, because I know she needs it as much as me if not more - when she was a kid she had a dog that died, and since we have been married two of her goldfish bought only by her have died. I hope she survives until we get what we need. I did not tell her I got her one, but I do tell her I want her not to die all the time, because that is the right thing for a man to say to a woman, believe me. My dad said it to my mom, and honest Bob says it to me. I told her what my package is, and she waits with me very many times. She deserves one, I know.

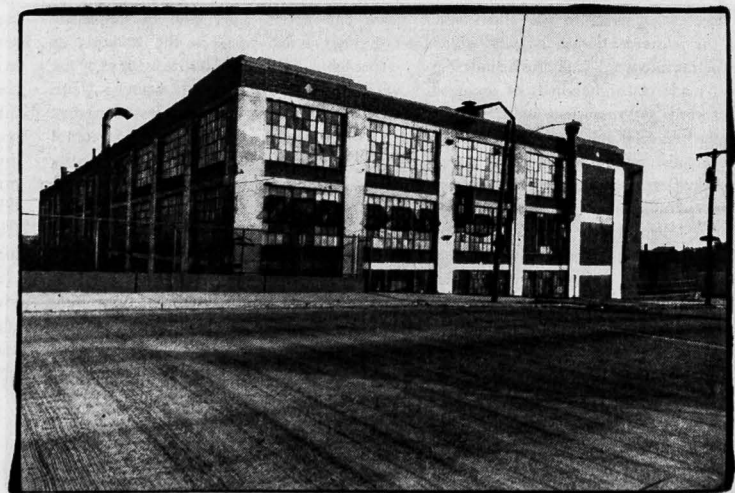
She actually just left the room, which is why it is okay to think about the surprise, because she cannot ask me to tell her what I am thinking, because it would be the surprise which I have in store for her, so I do not think it in front of her so I do not have to say, "Nothing," when she asks what I am thinking about. It is good and honorable not to lie to your wife when she asks what are you thinking, especially because a lot of time she already knows just exactly what it is that is on your mind. Like just now, how she knew I did not want to hear the television any more, and so she left the room for a second, and I know that she is going to turn it off, just like she knew I did not want to hear it any more. Just before she turned the television off, we heard a program, which I am not sure whether it was a reality program or a talk show, and a girl said, "Nobody understands me. Nobody will even try: I have a phantom uterus - my mom wishes it were real, my dad is mad because he wants to be the only phantom member of the family. You don't know me, don't judge me." And if you want to know what I am thinking because of what I heard her say is what I think of the theory of what I came up with about how Charlotte's Web was probably written by a spider, and that spider was trying to make people not be afraid of his kin. My wife thinks this is possible, and she is why I have this theory, because she is not afraid of spider, and she read this book a lot of times.

So I certainly heard the television go off, and I knew then that my thoughts were right about what she was going to do, but I did not tell her I knew what she was going to do, but not because I did not want to, but because she has not yet come back into the room, which does not scare me at all because she is independent and can do whatever she wants in the house, except that I am hearing things outside. I can hear people running down the driveway, and I can hear a siren, and a voice yelling crazy things from the area of my backyard, and I know for a very fact that there are policemen coming up my very lawn, and I am very sure that they have guns, and that my wife is probably waiting for them at my very front door, but it is okay, because I have decided I am not going to die today.

Timothy is graduating from Haverford College. Give him a job.



SOLIMAN LAWRENCE



RACHEL MACKOW

in real true life. But she likes when I act silly, and make up things that she did and accuse her of them, and I am good at it, so I do it.

What I do not do is criticize her, or the good job she does on cleaning the table, or think of other women, because she is the girl that I think about, and sit at the table alone and talk to, and when she is not there I sit there and think about her. But I have to be perfectly honest at this moment. I am not thinking about her right now, and even though it may seem to many people, if anyone came over and saw me sitting here thinking at my kitchen table, I am not thinking about my kitchen table either. If someone were here, I would tell them that what I am thinking about is not my table or my wife, but I how I am nervous that I have not yet received a package that I would very much like to receive.

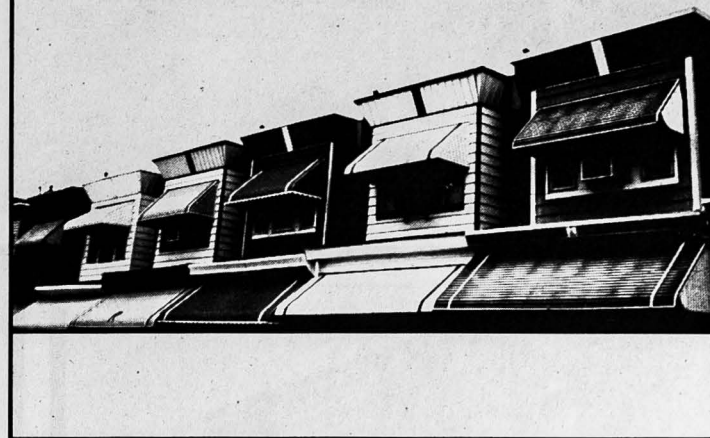
My wife knows how I like things to happen, so when I am not here when things happen, and she is, she knows what it is to do that would make me happy. And the thing is the mail, and the thing is putting it on the kitchen table for me to get when I am there, because I do not like to come home to mail in my mailbox if she is home, because the table is the place where it goes, and I know this, and she knows this. I am happy to do this for her if I

color, yellow is. But I did not receive what I wanted to receive even though it had been far longer than the 4-6 weeks I should have allowed for me to be happy with getting what I can expect to get on time to feel fine. If my table could talk, it would tell you that right now I am scared, and I bet it would come to comfort me, and tell me everything will be alright.

So for many days now, I have been sitting at my table, when I have come home, hoping to have found my package but not, and then thinking at my table about how I want it. And considered for a time, even not going out so that I could be at home when my package arrives, but now it is so late in coming that I am very thankful that I have not done such an irresponsible thing. My wife says I am very responsible, and with the exception of forgetting to put the mail on the table that one day I have not been irresponsible since the time I did not tape the season finale of her favorite program because I had fallen asleep listening to my "Soothing Sounds of Nature" tape, which I was only listening to help me digest my dinner that she made me that night which was chicken parmesan, and not to put me to sleep, which it did not have the right effect, even though I said, "I hope I do not fall asleep." Luckily, she

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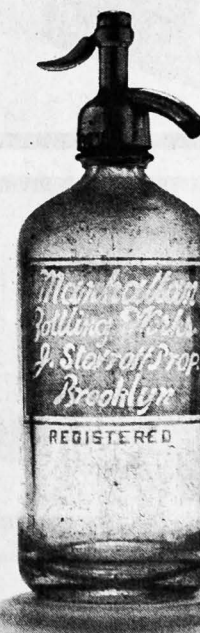
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Phenomenal nature shadows him wherever he goes. Clouds in the staring sky transmit to one another, by means of slow signs, incredibly detailed information...everything is a cipher and of everything he is the theme. Some of the spies are detached observers, such as glass surfaces and still pools; others, such as coats in store windows, are prejudiced witnesses, lynchers at heart; others again (running water, storms) are hysterical to the point of insanity, have a distorted opinion of him and grotesquely misinterpret his actions. He must be always on his guard and devote every minute and module of life to the decoding of the undulation of things.

—Vladimir Nabokov,
"Signs and Symbols"

JIM HOUSER

Jim Houser's paintings seem to be without beginning or end. Sets and sequences of flat, bright color, visually spare cartoon characters, almost semiotic block lettering, and descriptive text form a network of signs and signals that loop and repeat in varying combinations and iterations.

Houser has created a visual universe all his own, unconstrained by a single canvas or frame. The interior of Spector Gallery at 510 Bainbridge Street, the site of his new show, "Parts Per Million," is covered in his work. While there are individual canvases and painted objects, their contents bleed past the edges, and their constituent characters, phrases, words, and colors migrate across the walls, floors and other surfaces, disappearing, reappearing, and appropriating the space as their own playground.

The apparent randomness of Houser's work is stretched over deep, consistent patterns that read like a good pop song sounds, the same handful of riffs over and over again, but sounding slightly different and new each time. His painting is almost viral in its ability to replicate and spread. And like a virus, which finds certain hosts more hospitable than others, his painting is more likely to spread to those objects for which he feels some personal affinity: basketballs, eggs shells, hook rugs, Wallabee shoes, cigar boxes, and skateboard decks.

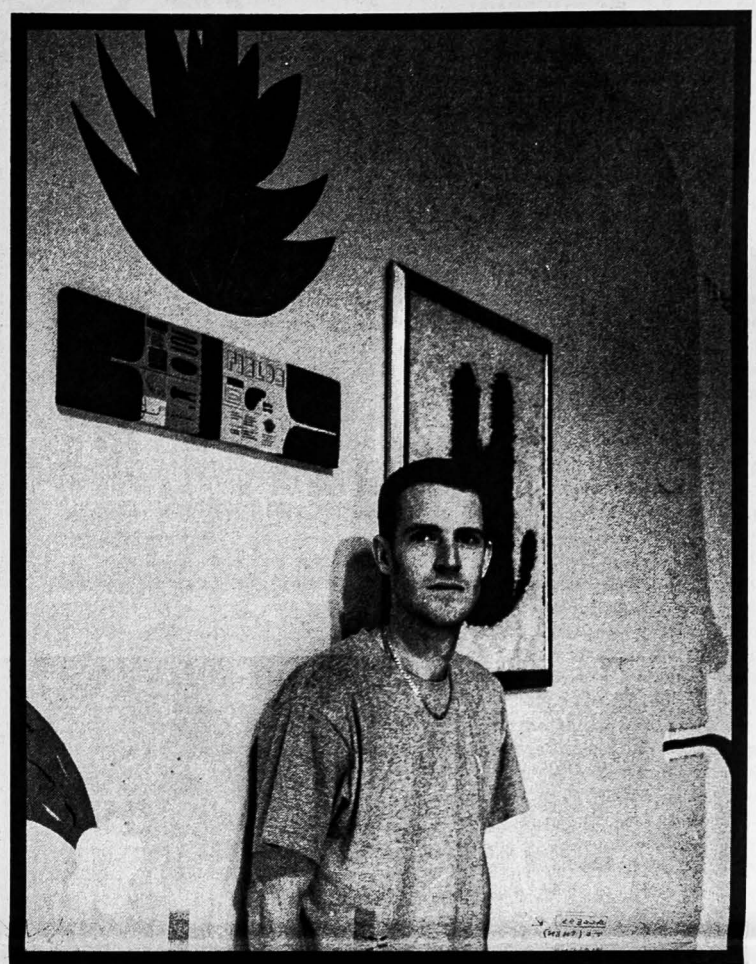
Skateboarding has always been integral to Houser's work. In addition to his actual paintings on decks and ramps, Houser is often shown in galleries and with artists linked to skateboarding. Houser, 29, previously worked with Shepard Fairey on the Obey Giant campaign before moving back to Philadelphia and joining the Space 1026 artist collective.

The new work on exhibit at the Spector Gallery shows Houser's growth over the last five years. The colors are sharper and more complimentary, the painting itself is cleaner, the lettering more inventive, and the composition more solid. Where his older canvases would have had characters and text overlapping wildly and without reason, the new paintings are more tightly structured, establishing a consistent rhythm between the pictorial blocks that both attract and befuddle the viewer.

Houser's work seems to take three basic forms: the aforementioned objects which Houser paints into word-sculpture hybrids; big canvases, made up of hundreds of arranged panels of words and characters; and the smaller canvases that orbit around the big ones like electron clouds. Since the individual pieces have no clear cause and effect, the paintings work like modules, open to endless combinations and re-assemblage by the viewer.

Through the years, Houser has populated his paintings with an extensive cast of characters: the octopus, the elephant, the crook, the lurker, the golem, the centipede, the cowboy hat, the germ, the birds, and the ghosts. Drawn in a crisp cartoon style that is more iconic than descriptive, the characters are simplified until they possess no obvious emotive or narrative role. Like the simple male and female figures on bathroom signs at airports (but with meanings that cheerfully elude interpretation), Houser's characters stoically and silently occupy the spaces given to them. Full sentences hover like captions that slipped the leash from their subjects. These longer phrases, like "IT DOMINATES THE MIND. EVENTS AND PHRASES SEEM TO REFERENCE IT BY COINCIDENCE," and "IT APPEARS IN DREAMS AND SPRINGS TO MIND AS SOON AS YOU WAKE," seem to suggest meanings that leap from canvas to canvas, and perhaps even loom like a tent over the entire show.

Houser's triumph is his creation of a private visual language, generated by his own weird rules, but serviceable to us all as a vessel for meaning. At times it seems the only way to wend your way through Houser's work is to project your own life upon it; to view his CROOK as your own CROOK and interpret his HARM as your own. There is a stoicism and distance to Houser's work. He seems like a benevolent but impotent deity hovering around his characters; he created them, but there is nothing he can do to help them now. He often puts his characters in tricky arrangements—in the mouths of the snakes or at the mercy of the Yeti-like lurker. But Houser's stingy renderings leave no room for looks of fear or pain that might elicit some sympathy



PHOTOS: BEN TIVEN

from the viewer. A Houser lion eating a Houser man has all the emotion of a mathematical equation.

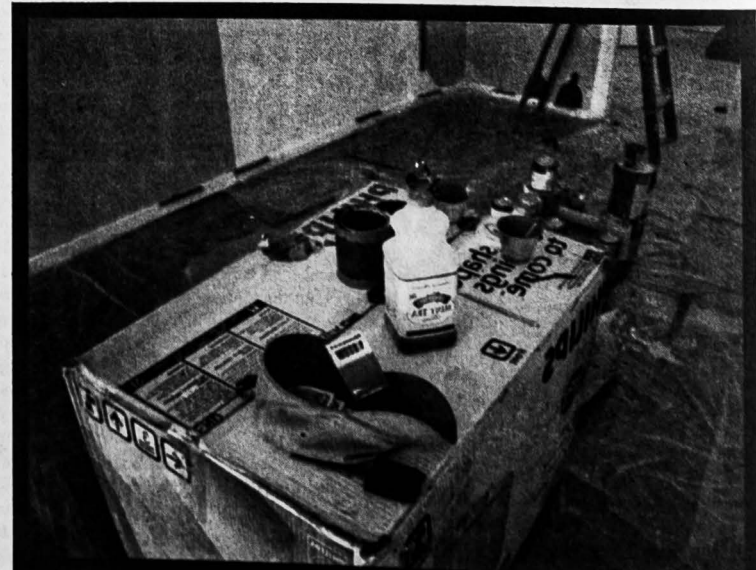
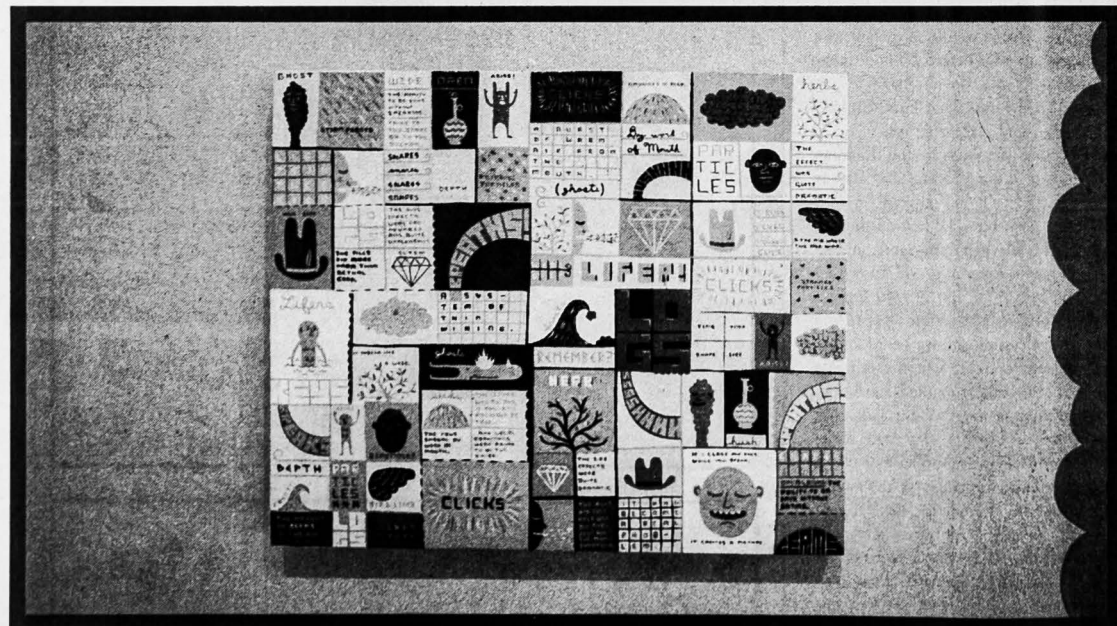
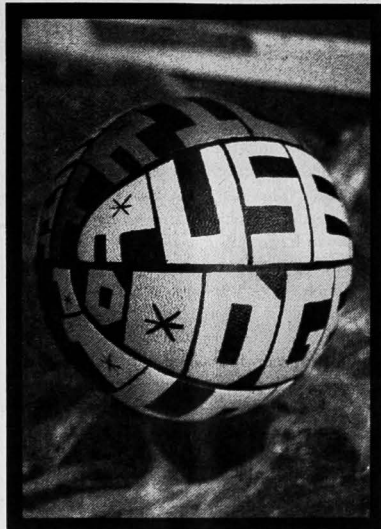
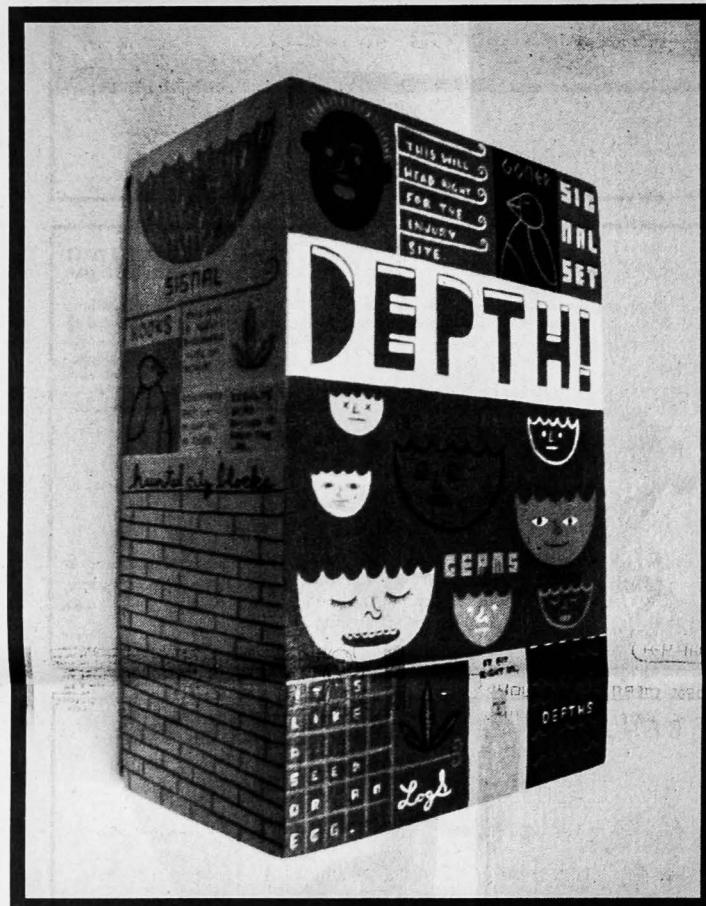
At its best, Houser's mixed media works riff on the object, or word, itself, often blurring the gap between pictorial and verbal signage. He paints the words FAKE, TRICK, RUSE, DODGE, and PLOY onto a basketball, an object which might be used for mild forms of such chicaneries. This kind of frequently occurring formal trick, in the tradition of Jasper Johns and Rene Magritte, is saved by the whimsy and craft of Houser's painting. With thick block lettering in warm colors set against the black basketball, the object becomes appealing as a painting and a physical entity that is anthropomorphized to appear playful and aggressive.

In Houser's work, words are manipulated in regards to their sign, signifier and symbol. For example, the words SHIFTS, DEPTHS, or FIELDS are painted with the same form and line weight as Houser's figures, pushing the words into a physical and psychic space alongside the pictures. Other words are painted in styles that correlate directly to their meanings. Ominous words such as GONERS or TEN TEETH are written in bones. DEPTH is rendered three dimensionally, while HUSH, SHHH, GHOST, & BREATHS are painted in wind swept arcs. Other words have fixed pictorial associations. (Pictures of diamonds are always accompanied by CUT. Eggs are always filled with the word

EGG.) Some words, like GERM or LURKER, are accompanied by descriptive characters, and also float on their own, allowing the interchangeability of word and image.

Houser's new paintings echo the work of Margaret Kilgallen and Barry McGee, but while the aesthetic territory may be familiar, Houser's work is distinguished by the impenetrable personal meanings he invests into his signs and signifiers, and the sheer fantasy and playfulness with which he treats language. It is as if Houser has found the usual straight-line trips through our English habits too boring for his taste, and has slapped a Game Genie onto our 8-bit words to noodle around with the colors and procure copiously unfair amounts of extra lives. Normally, one would expect another's system of signs to be an inhospitable and frightening encounter, like finding your landlord's old notebooks of Dungeons & Dragons characters stacked in the back of the closet. But Houser's private sign world is much more pleasing than these farfetched examples. Instead of being wholly foreign, it offers itself up for any kind of translation.

Parts Per Million is showing through May 31 at Spector Gallery, 510 Bainbridge Street. The gallery is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. - 6 p.m., or by appointment. More information is available by calling 215-238-0840 or visiting www.spectorspector.com.



A 2x2 grid of children's drawings. The top-left drawing is titled "A DANCE CONTEST FOR PIRATES" and shows a pirate ship, a pirate, and a crown. The top-right drawing shows a person and two circular objects. The bottom-left drawing is titled "THE EARTH" and shows a dinosaur. The bottom-right drawing is titled "THEY ARE EATING" and shows a person and a box labeled "BLOCKS".

VIEW MASTER

WHAT WE SAW WHEN WE GOT THERE

miscellany

EIGHT WORTHY ITEMS

ARRANGED INTO THE FORM OF A LIST

BY LAKSHMI INDRASIMHAN

1. McDERMOTT AND MCGOUGH

Another in the long line of dandified artist duos whose lives are thinly separated from their art. The two live as in the Victorian era, eschewing planes and cars for the luddite charm of dog-drawn buggies across the Williamsburg Bridge and two week long ship voyages to their home in Ireland, an 18th century house with neither running water or electricity. They use words like "passage" for "trip", wear acetate collars, ruffled clothing and refuse to inhabit a past sullied by someone else's interpretation of it. The two gained fame in the 1980s more for the supposed vigor with which they engaged in their daily "time experiments" and their crazy parties than for anything they produced with paint and canvas. Despite self

of voyeurism and journeyed distance. His pairing of drawings and lithographs with obtuse quotations from everyone from Henry James to Micky Spillane have a textual heavy handedness that at once robs the words of their steam and imparts to them a level of mysterious meaning. There is an inconsistency in the quality of his graphic technique; some drawings look like amateur diagrams on Old West posters, others are sensuous and lush, displaying a deft and subtle hand, others are as flat and listless as if pulled from the pages of a Lichtenstein book, while still others resonate with an adolescent nihilism best displayed in one piece which features a scowling Jesus crushing a serpent, with the caption, "Don't fuck with the apocalypse." Of the hundreds of drawings on display here some are ponderous or narratively dense. Others express all the taut

ined the innate essence of the buildings could show through best in photographs that were unfettered by the play of light and shadow, where an overcast sky exhibited a tone that was neither celebratory or mournful. Mindful only of how form arose from conditions of use through the immediate biology of iron and steel, they simultaneously ignore the manmade biology of architectural design, exhibiting their work through the typological groupings and displays characteristic of a lepidopterist. The functionality on which the Bechers claim to focus is only inferred, but never exposed. The buildings have been abandoned because they no longer exist to produce. In a reversal of capitalist ideology, the Bechers fetishize not the product, but the nonhuman producer. They seem interested in structure as a facet and result of life and not with the high modernist fascistics of bettering life, by bettering the stuffs, or even commenting on the stuffs (here architectural and urban design) of life. See also: Le Corbusier's Chandigarh to see a city at its most monstrous and abstracted from its people.

4. LA VACHE QUI RIT.

Laughing cow cheese. Growing up, I only knew it as Kiri - spreadable, almost plasterable cream cheese that came in foil wrapped squares

architectural theory, mythology, Freudian psychoanalysis, Mormon law, and hardcore music fanzines. The current exhibit at the Guggenheim seems largely superfluous, despite Barney's opinion that the various sculptures are artworks in and of themselves. The Guggenheim, done up as it was for its starring role in Cremaster 3, is the jumping off point for an exhibit that destroys the films' myths. Instead of being illuminating, all the strangely lacquered objects are in fact just plastic, and many of the sculptures (save the iron cog tower from Cremaster 3 and the punctuated piano), don't look as ungodly in the flat light. There are photographs, (mostly just film stills), and watching Barney's sexual and psychobiblical gymnastics to the commentary of a gaggle of NYU freshmen was less than appetizing. Only the glassy, black room on the top floor and the opportunity to see the films in their entirety is the reason to go.

Barney's cinematic influences include Peter Greenaway. Greenaway, with his hushed and cock-eyed visions of violence and sex, sets them in a theater of opulently constructed but essentially empty (both spatially and psychologically) time and space (many of his films seem to occur on a boat in the middle of nowhere). They are both baroque, shunning subtlety and realism for a self indulgent and heightened drama. Despite their tendency towards post-classical imagery that goes beyond perfection

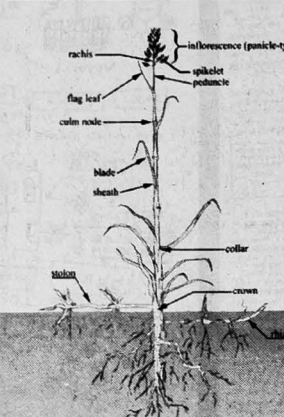
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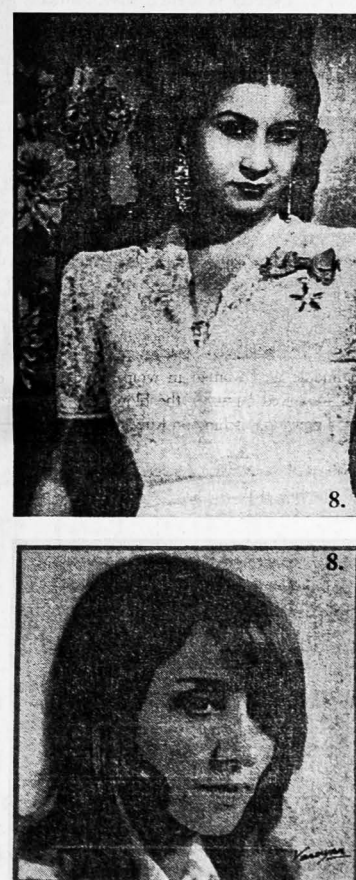
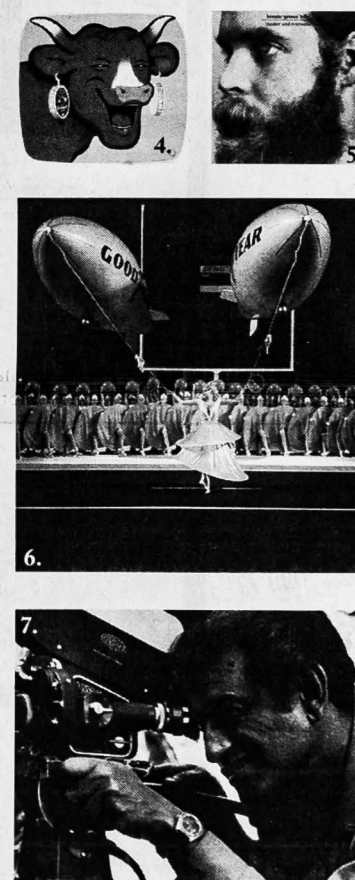
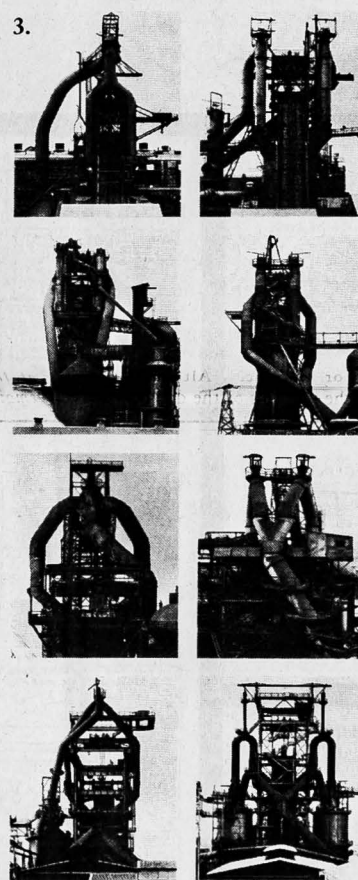
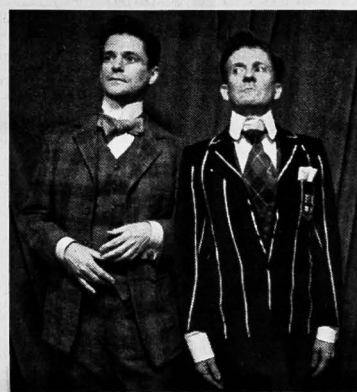
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acknowledged roots in the stereotypical camp interests of homosexual males, the unfortunate fact remains that their paintings are characterized best by a poor draftsmanship and faux naïveté that would never have survived the rigorous standards of a less forgiving era. Though they may live surrounded by the bric-a-brac of the past, their paintings are haunted by the burdensome and self-conscious irony which they have otherwise expunged from their daily lives. Their recent work is a sort of idiot savant take on Nazi propaganda, with all the folksiness and none of the gravity. Regardless, I enjoy the two for their dogged dandiness and their overcompensating efforts at "raising their station" by claiming for their own any romance that may have once existed in daily life. Their beautifully crafted cyanotypes and palladium prints with subjects dressed as mythological or historical characters don't move far beyond the level of intricate fashion photography; yet, they are charming records of two lives where riveting concerns include issues that feign an interest in "authenticity" like "original starch" (available apparently only in Russia or Eastern Europe) and other party boy necessities like "finding ourselves a boyfriend." See also: Pierre et Gilles. Komar and Melamid. Gilbert and George. Sacco and Vanzetti. Byzewski and Ibarra. Piano and Rogers. Leopold and Loeb.

2. RAYMOND PETTIBON

This sought-after record sleeve designer has traveled far from his roots as a Southern California antic cult figure to become among the most important modern artists today. Raymond Pettibon's show in January at David Zwirner in Chelsea culminated in a sheer mass

and lurid realism of a Weegee photograph. Some are almost comforting in their charming simplicity as if the viewer too may rest when Pettibon gives himself a break from his fixations. Pettibon's seeming refusal to self-edit creates an emotional and allusive world through both image and text that are, as in real life, filled with the subtle and outrageous. Pettibon's supposed simplicity of technique does not mask his enviable imagination, nor his encyclopedic knowledge, or even the rueful fun of what they do.

3. HILLA AND BERND BECHER

For someone who counts construction sites covered in snow among her favorite landscapes, the unendingly chic work of the Bechers comes as both the vindication and the jealous disappointment in realizing that someone else loves something as much as you do, perhaps even loves it better. Showcasing the industrial complexes of Europe and North America as thus loving and beloved, the Bechers, part artists, part documentarians feature deserted factories, bridges, silos, and grain elevators in their photographs as they stare stoically into the space before them. The buildings pose for the photographers: in profile, with their backs turned. Still, every photo lacks any outside perspective, subjectivity or context. Every detail and façade is regarded with a focused disengagement that is determined to present its subjects as quietly revealing while oblivious to their use as practical objects with commercial histories. Founders of the German school, Sachlichkeit, or objectivity, whose followers today include their students Andreas Gursky and Thomas Struth, the Bechers imag-

and triangles, and which I occasionally relinquished in exchange for the more dynamic and oddly space-age mini Edams. Kiri re-entered my life recently at a Vietnamese grocer on Washington Avenue. Perfect on omelets (the way my mother made them) or on sliced baguettes with apricot preserves (as I had everyday for three weeks in Morocco).

5. BEARDS.

My father has been bearded for more than thirty-five years. I come from a land of mustached, bearded men. Nevertheless, seeing Will Oldham on stage this winter in all his bearded glory, I remembered yet again, what every child who ran away at the sight of my grandfather's foot and a half long beard knew: that the beard, while an agent of mystery and disguise, is also a sign of authority and strength. Oldham was at once taxidermist at rest, Whitmanesque militiaman, and the hero of my Miles Standish pilgrim dreams, reclaiming from the hippie contingent the gravitas of being bearded. You've probably by now seen him in gorgeous sepia on the cover of *Master and Everyone*. Beards: Also the term used to describe Emily Hale and Mary Trevelyan, whose relationships with T.S. Eliot saved his alleged homosexuality from public scrutiny.

6. MATTHEW BARNEY

Almost as fantastic as the level of hype Matthew Barney has generated is the amount of funding he receives. His influences range from NFL films to Freemasonry, sexual biology (his first film was called *Blind Perineum*),

to the point of distorted muscular beauty, both Barney and Greenaway's work is saved from mere sensationalism by being saturated in culture and history. Excessive image upon image is proffered to the viewer to the point of glut-tony, but with intellectual agendas and influences so compulsive and pleasing in their seeming gratuitousness. The viewer's appreciation of the work would be much deepened from extra reading and research (See the thrillingly exhaustive exhibition catalogue). Some may feel oppressed by the encroaching lunacy of Barney's films, swathed as they are in a Vogue-like shimmer, but the arcane symbolism which animates them and their sheer visual artistry frees them from being merely fashionable or solipsistic; and rightly ignores the demands of unsophisticated viewers who wish that art's redemptive qualities be always sympathetically and patently expressed. The Cremaster exhibition at the Guggenheim, which screens all five films and exhibits all attendant paraphernalia including sculptures, installations, paintings and gynecological instruments covered in Vaseline, closes June 11, 2003.

7. SATYAJIT RAY

When it is warm, and internal rhythms change in preparation for the monsoons, my aesthetic preferences switch from corpulent and curlicued to the undermoderate and slim elegance of the neorealist *Apu Trilogy*. Indian filmmaker, Satyajit Ray's masterpiece of tells the story of a young boy named Apu, tracing his tragic but ultimately uplifting life story from his childhood

VIEW MASTER

A REVIEW OF PICTURES: MOVING & STILL

from ITEMS, page 10

in a destitute Bengali village (Pathar Panchali), to his move to the big city of Benares (Aparajito), to his adulthood as a wanderer (Apu Sansar). The first of the three films, *Pathar Panchali*, is shot in the most loving and despairing black and white, and with a heartbreakingly spare soundtrack by Ravi Shankar, first-time director Ray and first-time cinematographer Subrata Mitra presented a world of aching beauty and tension. With scenes of crushing everyday village life and death interspersed with those of children at play in the rain, and in the fields and forests, and a heavy use of symbolism, Ray was hailed for helping Indian film grow up and out of the melodramatic and swashbuckling gutter and take on nobler truths. He has similarly been accused of giving westerners the poverty-stricken India that they want, one filled with a people who are spiritually enlivened and dignified by their simplicity and struggles. The characters in the films do seem nobler than most, but the unforgivable India, though emotionally demanding, is held up with a loving forbearance and intense regard.

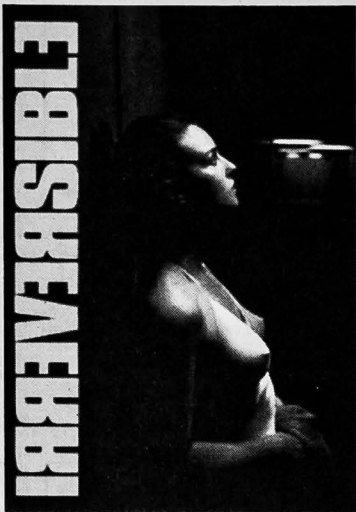
8. OUM KHOLTOUM AND FAIRUZ

With three thousand years of Iraqi cultural history recently crumbled into dust, or into the Manhattan townhouses of wily collectors, I console myself with the idea that someday the richness of secular and religious Arab culture, will recover from its beating at the hands of fundamentalists, apologists and foreign crusaders. Arab singers Oum Kholtoum and Fairuz are two of the most important figures in modern Arab arts. Their voices mix elegance with the timelessness of a sepulchral ululation. I conflate the sound of their singing with the mid-century golden era of Indian film songs, when voices were ripe and heavy with sadness and everyone's sanity was hanging by a thread. Oum Kholtoum was known for the reaching throatiness of her voice and her elegant personal style. With a repertoire that included religious qasid and modern love songs, her voice seems to struggle through the grief of everything. All this and the disarming vision of a bedazzled middle-aged woman in wraparound shades. Husky-voiced Fairuz is the blond and ageless diva I grew up watching on Kuwaiti television. With all the interperate glamour of the Lebanese, it is all the more unsettling to hear those same laboring sounds of love and nostalgia emerge from her goldenness. Through their music, one sinks through the rough timbre of Arabic into a paralyzing sort of longing.

This is Lakshmi Indrasimban's first piece for THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

IRREVERSIBLE

Directed by Gaspar Noe
2002, 99 Minutes, France



review

BY DAN BUSKIRK

I'm always intrigued when a piece of music, a painting, or a film is accused of not being "art". If the piece provokes such doubts, then it surely would seem to be fulfilling art's role of pushing us to question things in life. It has been a while since a film has received as enraged a reaction as Gaspar Noe's second full-length work, *Irreversible*, has: more walkouts, denunciations and "no stars" reviews than anything since *Bad Lieutenant*. *Irreversible* is a film that demands such absolutes. It is perhaps the most singularly brutal and disturbing film I've ever witnessed; its fictional violence summons the punch and authenticity of snuff films or security camera footage. Horrified reviewers report that

the film's savagery is its sole *raison d'être*, but it is what comes after this violence - the characters' subtle and thoughtless objectifications of others and themselves - that make the film's gut-churning situations linger.

A brief introductory segment features the nihilistic butcher of Noe's debut *I Stand Alone*, sitting naked in a cramped room discussing the frailty of events in the face of time. We are then thrown into the street and meet Pierre (Albert Dupontel), attempting to keep up with his friend Marcus (Vincent Cassel), who, in an unreasonable fury, is trying to find a location called Club Rectum and a man named Le Tenia ("tapeworm"). If the search for a digestive parasite isn't surreal enough to clue one in that Noe is exhibiting a sewage-filled underworld, his camera work should. Shot through a filtered haze of golden brown (all the better to evoke the stench of human waste), Noe's cinematography swirls in nauseating circles, its point of view that of a fly attracted to the location's stench. As the camera barges through the back rooms of the gay sex club, men beg to be serviced by the intense Marcus, and images of consensual and non-consensual sex spin past us. Finally Le Tenia is found and quickly dispatched with the aid of a fire extinguisher and an unrestrained hammering to the skull.

The viewer too is pummeled by the violence in front of him and at no point does one relate to the characters carrying it out. One finds oneself only wondering how people could treat another person with such callousness. The narrative then jumps backward to suggest the impetus for such an act: Le Tenia's monstrous rape and beating of a young woman named Alex (Monica Bellucci).

Though not particularly explicit, or even joylessly titillating, this scene has instantly topped the list of cinema's most disturbing moments, though Noe goes to no great lengths to make it unusually violent or sadistic. Although many protest the ugliness of the depiction, the

unvarnished horror of the act is completely fitting for the reality it attempts to depict. The rape extends a nearly unbearable ten minutes, and seems to be the point when audiences lose their trust in Noe (eliciting a walkout even at the press screening). They begin to suspect that he is torturing the audience for his own hateful excitement. But perhaps a more palatable depiction of rape would have been a less honest, if not even less moral, choice.

From here the film continues backward in time, to a point earlier in the evening when our trio are at a raging house party. Although their behavior now seems quite "normal," when viewed within the context of the opening events, one sees the way these friends and lovers treat each other as less than human. We discover that Marcus and Alex are lovers, and that Pierre is Alex's ex-lover, which has left them with an uneasy friendship. Marcus taunts Pierre, questions his sexuality and pushes him into piles of women. Pierre accuses Marcus of "stealing" Alex away from him and both Marcus and Alex appear to be fondling strangers. As the story continues its backward trajectory these themes of objectification continue, from small things - like the way Marcus drapes his arm around Alex's neck in a choke-hold type manner - to the couple's sexual play, which involves Marcus doing things "to" Alex, rather than "with" her. The film's most disturbing idea is that the abhorrent behavior of the its opening scenes seems to have its roots in everyday attitudes and postures.

If you think you are up to the film's challenges, *Irreversible* is as vigorously moral and thoughtful as it is unnervingly gruesome. Perhaps you could even call it a religious film, with its closing crane shot: a final image of beauty, knowledge and fertility which ascends into an angry, strobelt heaven.

Dan Buskirk lives in Philadelphia and DJs for Princeton's WPRB 103.3 FM and at the 700 Club. He can be reached via email at dbuskirk1@hotmail.com.

THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT'S
REPERTORY
FILM CALENDAR
MAY 2003

BY ANDREW REPASKY MCELHINNEY
BOLD=RECOMMENDED EVENT

TUESDAY MAY 6

9:00 PM • Fancy Pants Cinema (FLIX at North 3rd) • FREE
10:00 PM to 2 AM • The 700 Club Jukebox
Peepshow: "Once Upon A Time..." • FREE

WEDNESDAY MAY 7

4:30 PM • County Theater • Barton Fink • \$7.75
7:00 PM • Ambler Theater • Election • \$7.75

THURSDAY MAY 8

4:30 PM • County Theater • Barton Fink • \$7.75
8:00 PM • International House • En Rachachant & Nathalie Granger • \$6

FRIDAY MAY 9

8:00 PM • International House • Les Contrabandiers • \$6
12 MIDNIGHT • Premier Theater
Friday the 13th Part 3-D • \$6

SATURDAY MAY 10

1:00 PM • International House
Toute la memoire du monde
Mon Chien / Chickamauga /
La mer et les jours • \$6
7:00 PM • International House
Anatomy of a Marriage: My Days
With Francoise • \$6
8:00 PM • The Y • Underground Films From '66 • \$9
9:00 PM • International House
Anatomy of a Marriage: My Days
With Jean-Marc • \$6

SUNDAY MAY 11

2:00 PM • Colonial Theatre • Double Indemnity • \$6
TBA Matinee • County Theater • Barton Fink • \$7.75
2:00 PM • The Y • Underground Films From '66 • \$9
4:00 PM • International House • L'Amour Fou • \$6
7:30 PM • Drive-In Theater at the Broadway
Theater • The Candy Snatchers • \$6

MONDAY MAY 12

7:00 PM • County Theater • Barton Fink • \$7.75

TUESDAY MAY 13

9:00 PM • Fancy Pants Cinema (FLIX at North 3rd) • FREE

WEDNESDAY MAY 14

4:30 PM • County Theater • Rules of The Game • \$7.75
7:00 PM • Ambler Theater • Barton Fink • \$7.75

THURSDAY MAY 15

4:30 PM • County Theater • Rules of The Game • \$7.75

FRIDAY MAY 16

7:00 PM • International House • I Am A Man • \$6

SATURDAY MAY 17

3:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Kids Corner
Classic Family Film: Buster Keaton:
Sherlock Jr. / One Week • \$8.50

SUNDAY MAY 18

2:00 PM • Colonial Theatre • Kiss of Death • \$6
TBA Matinee • County Theater • Rules of The
Game • \$7.75
6:30 PM • Film at the Prince • Standing in the
Shadows of Motown • \$8.50
7:30 PM • Drive-In Theater at the Broadway
Theater • The Shaw Bros' Five
Masters of Death • \$6

MONDAY MAY 19

7:00 PM • County Theater • Rules of The Game • \$7.75

TUESDAY MAY 20

9:00 PM • Fancy Pants Cinema (FLIX at North 3rd) • FREE

WEDNESDAY MAY 21

7:00 PM • Ambler Theater • Rules of The Game • \$7.75

SUNDAY MAY 25

2:00 PM • Colonial Theatre • Touch of Evil • \$6
7:30 PM • Drive-In Theater at the Broadway
Theater • The Losers • \$6

TUESDAY MAY 27

9:00 PM • Fancy Pants Cinema (FLIX at North 3rd) • FREE

WEDNESDAY MAY 28

7:30 PM • Film at the Prince • PIFVA Shoot
Out • FREE

THURSDAY MAY 29

3:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: Rages and Rhymes • FREE

FRIDAY MAY 30

NOON • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: Rages and Rhymes • FREE
7:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Temple
University Film Screening • \$5
7:00 PM • Darrass Theatre • Triple Horror
Feature: Friday the 13th • The
Shining • Army of Darkness • \$10

SATURDAY MAY 31

3:45 PM • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: Films For Kids, FREE
4:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: True Feelings • FREE
6:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: Comedies and Dramas • FREE
8:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Youth Media
Jam: Video Slam • FREE

SUNDAY JUNE 1

2:00 PM • Colonial Theatre • Tom Jones • \$6
6:00 PM • Film at the Prince • Drexel Senior
Film Screening, FREE

MONDAY JUNE 2

7:00 PM • The Five Spot • Features at The
Five III • Feature Film TBA • \$5

TUESDAY JUNE 3

9:00 PM • Fancy Pants Cinema (FLIX at North 3rd) • FREE
10 PM to 2 AM • The 700 Club • Jukebox
Peepshow: "The Berlin Stories" • FREE

FRIDAY JUNE 6

8:00 PM • International House • The Cabinet
of Dr. Caligari • \$6

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THE COLONIAL THEATRE, 227 Bridge Street,
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THE COUNTY THEATER, 20 East State Street,
Doylestown, 215-345-6789, www.countytheater.com

DARRASS THEATRE, Main Street, Boonton NJ,
973-633-7527, www.thejulietfund.org

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7519, www.ExhumedFilms.com/dit.html

EXHUMED FILMS, THE BROADWAY THEATER, 43
South Broadway, Pittman New Jersey, 856-589-
7519, www.ExhumedFilms.com

FANCY PANTS CINEMA (FLIX at North 3rd),
801 North Third Street, 215-413-3666

FEATURES AT THE FIVE III, The Five Spot, 5
South Bank Street, 215-901-3771, www.armcinema25.com

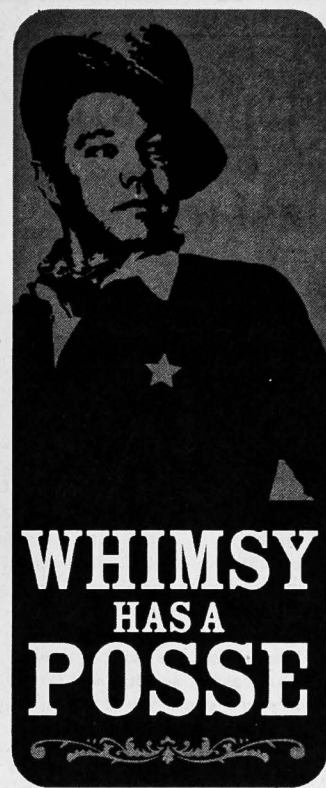
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www.princemusictheater.org

GERSHMAN Y, 401 South Broad Street, 215-
446-3022, www.gershmany.org

INTERNATIONAL HOUSE, 3701 Chestnut Street,
215-895-6542, www.ihphilly.org

JUKEBOX/PEEPSHOW, The 700 Club, 700 North
2nd Street, 215-413-3181,
www.armcinema25.com

PREMIER THEATER, 245 North Broadway,
Pennsville NJ, 856-678-1667



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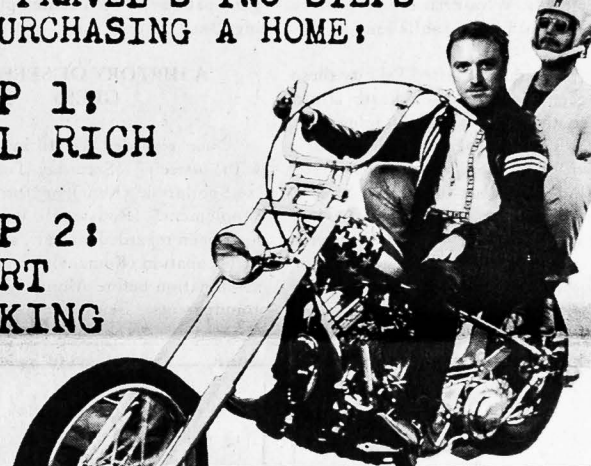
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OH SWEET RELEASE!

A YOUNG PERSON'S SPRINGTIME GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF SELF-CONGRESS

BY LORD WHIMSY

*"And Onan...spilled his seed upon the ground...
and the thing which he did displeased the Lord..."*
(Genesis, 38:8-10)

Even in these days of post-millennial tension, Spring continues to yield its many delights, which never fail to bring a warm front to South Central Whimsy. Who among us hasn't reveled in the chorus of randy amphibians heralding the warming days in their dark, vernal pools? Verily, one harkens to the clarion call of Spring when one detects the issue of flatulent toads wafting under the nostrils—doubtlessly Nature's way of making room for the swelling in their nethers! The thawed ground beneath one's feet writhes with the reawakening of the stout mammalian races, as evidenced by the subsequent bouquet of stricken skunks on country roads. Why, even the first waves of prickly heat offer a subtle kind of satisfaction.

But for as much blessed Felicity these harbingers of the Rousing Earth afford us, surely the greatest among these pleasures is what is known as "spring fever"; along with the first sights of wanton crocuses and flirtatious daffodils comes a carnal yearning that blooms in the lap, rendering young and old alike mad with illicit longings of the bouncy-bouncy variety. Ah, Spring and its cornucopia of joys. RRRRROWW!

In an effort to curtail a blight of cold sores, love bites and awkward pauses at social engagements—not to mention the possibility of screaming, illegitimate moppets smudging my shoes with their infernal spittle at garden parties in these, the very busiest months of my social calendar—it behooves us to remember that Nature, in all its abiding, munificent Bounty, has provided us with a most pleasant contingency so that we may release our baser instincts whilst neutralizing the detriments to society that often come with said urges. I am speaking, of course, of Onanism, or Self-Congress.

(Frankly, it is either this or sweaty contact sports, which are much too vulgar a pastime to even contemplate engaging. But I digress...)

A HISTORY OF SELF-CONGRESS

Once regarded as "filthy commerce with oneself" (Saturday Post, 1718), "self pollution" (Kant), or "the dangerous supplement" (Rousseau), onanism has long been regarded, at best, as a childish preoccupation (Romans); or, at worst, an abomination before Almighty God (your grandparents). Being a colossal pervert,

a voluptuary and leering degenerate, I dismiss this line of thinking; rather, I view Self-Congress to be an admirable way to correct the rousing of humors when one's toadstool feels particularly ambitious.

And thus, history is of precious little interest when one wants to get all of one's pebbles in the air, so on with the show...

RECOMMENDED ACCOUTREMENTS

MOOD / SETTING

A proper setting must be created in one's environs that is conducive to eliciting the mood for Self-Congress. I myself have a parlor in my manse specifically outfitted for myself and guests, should they find themselves "in need." Sedate light from bejeweled lanterns, suggestive taxidermy, luxurious pillows, mirrors (oh my yes) and other chinoiserie are recommended, for a chamber made for this purpose is indeed a Republic of Self-Love, and should be treated with utmost reverence. Regardless of one's tastes, it is essential that the proper atmosphere be in place before the Tears of Venus make themselves known.

LOTIONS, TINCTURES AND OINTMENTS

Many inventive and exotic facilitators can be procured from the local apothecary (hot mustards, butters, whale oil), but I would recommend Lubriderm Daily UV Lotion (SPF 15). UV protection is important if you feel, as I do, that one's nethers should remain the youngest part of one's person. This lotion renders one's Golden Chalice as smooth and supple as a dolphin's belly; and, dare I say, I find that the scent of this particular lotion brings to mind delicate cherry blossoms lazing in the far-away imperial gardens of the Japans. By Apollo's ear, I am swooning just at the very recollection of it!

TISSUE FOR YOUR ISSUE

For a virile gent of a copious bent (a most amusing rhyme, no?), Kleenex is not very absorbent. It is also tacky and should be used only by those of low birth, the hurried or the infirm. If one must go "slumming" or is feeling particularly tawdry, better to go with two-ply, quilted paper towels—Brawny has a nice "downtown" feel, I am told. More often than not, a warm, moist washcloth is an elegant solution, and is a good alternative for the environmentally conscious. Embroidered terrycloth or felt kerchiefs for such occasions are ideal; indeed, I have a collection of such seed-cloths that rival my collection of gloves! That having been said, silk is a problematic material for such uses.

MISCELLANEOUS ACCOUTREMENTS

Neck corsets, or "cupid's throttle," go well with ether frolics gone delightfully awry. (Whalebone-ribbed models must be custom fitted: see your outfitter or haberdasher.) Knotted cords, or "Mark Twains" are also popular items, especially among those who have served in certain military regiments (the Scots Dragoons, for instance). Printed materials, such as the ribald works of Aubrey Beardsley or the breathless verse of Lord Byron, are sure to give one a shudder of anticipation as one reaches the glistening shores of Delight.

METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Below are some favorite techniques for beginners and advanced alike. A caveat: Alternate your regimen between three or four methods, lest you find yourself with carpal tunnel, or as we say in Philadelphia, "Uncle Ed's Claw." Be advised that all of us in God's kingdom are of differing physiologies and tastes, and as such, must find a unique combination of regimens that yield the most agreeable, individual results. That having been said, here is a short list of some classics and curiosities:

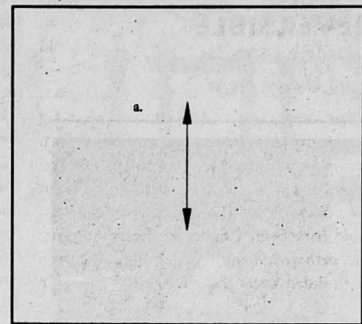


fig. a.) The Bumpy Blue Canoe, or Hiawatha High-Hat: Simplest of all methods. Entry-level two-stroke most often picked up by pubescent and other brash youth on scouting excursions. "Bet you can't do just one!" was our battle cry in days of old. Ah, lost youth...

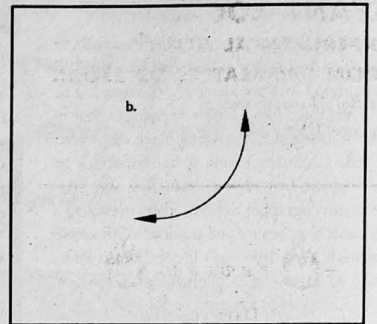


fig. b.) The Flying Dutchman, or Slant Six: Popular among sailors, as it is easy to execute with linked arms, a practice common in maritime jigs. Earliest evidence of this maneuver has been found on Grecian urns from the third century BC. Reputed to be the underlying cause behind the mutiny on the HMS Bounty, but it is best not to dwell on such things.

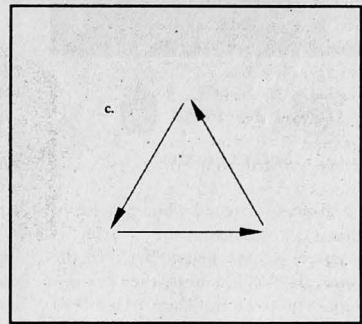


fig. c.) The Scarlet Pharaoh, or Secret Handshake: Three equal moves in a triangular pattern from the trunk. A classic, elegant in its simplicity, albeit a bit somber. Rosicrucians and other secret guilds have long since incorporated this method into their nocturnal rituals, hence the curious aprons. Also a favorite among geometry enthusiasts.

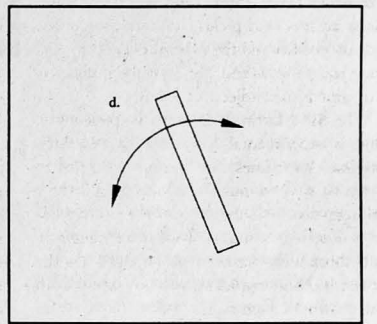


fig. d.) The Sister O'Grady: A series of smacks with a wooden ruler, followed by sitting in cold water and receiving harsh words of chastisement from your squire or retainer. Horsehair britches optional. Popular with guilt-wracked clergy. Good for writer's block.

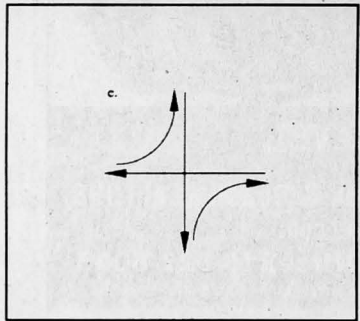


fig. e.) The Iron Cross, or Teutonic Four-Stroke. Lots of right angles. Efficient, severe, almost mechanistic in its movements. Invented by the Italian Futurists, but soon adopted and made popular by the Germanic intelligentsia after World War I. Kraftwerk albums and train schedules make apt companions to this method; Wagner and sausage will do as well, if you like a Rougher Ride through the Fatherland, so to speak.

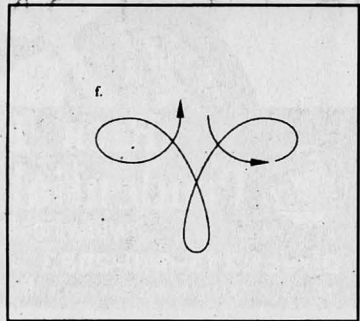


fig. f.) The Fleur-de-Lis: Strokes are elaborate, almost lyrical. Requires a limber wrist, due to the heavily mannered method of execution. Popular during the reign of Louis XIV, it was incorporated into etiquette at court orgies. Was often used as a warm-up exercise before dueling. Gerard Depardieu is said to be a master of this technique; but he won't show you, so don't bother asking. He's difficult that way.

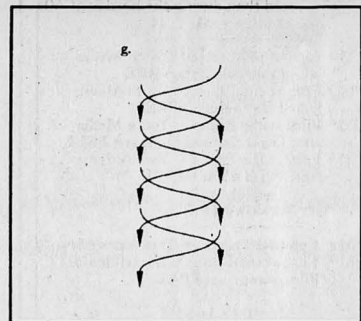


fig. g.) The Maypole: Best for garden parties that have a preponderance of sturdy, fresh-faced maidens experienced with braiding techniques (you know, field hockey types). Stravinsky's "Rite of Spring" optional, but preferable. Falco's "Der Kommissar" or Men Without Hats "Safety Dance" also make for fine accents. Or not.

POUR LA FEMME

It is important to note that while male Self-Congress has a rich historical tradition and has remained virtually unchanged for centuries, female Self-Congress, which is arguably a much more complex and esoteric art form, has undergone a renaissance over the last 50 years in the West. Once relegated to fertility rituals, witches covens, washing machines, shower heads, "one-handed books" and the odd vegetable or horse (eg., Catherine the Great), the fairer sex, through the blessings of Modernity, have now a plethora of giggle-and-blush-inducing implements that vibrate, writhe and possibly even wink upon command. For a true emporium of modern feminine bliss, see Toys In Babeland: www.babeland.com.

Please do not take offense that I have given female Self-Congress short shrift; it is due to the fact that I do not feel qualified to comment too elaborately on the subject, since Fate has cursed me with only one set of reproductive organs; however, I must also add that, in my experience, I find that women often have more constructive things to do with their time, like ironing one's neckerchiefs or baking some delicious raspberry tarts.

Goodness, that sounds simply delicious at the moment, doesn't it?

RECOMMENDED READING

"Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation," by Thomas W. Laqueur (2003)

"Onanism, or, The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution and All Its Frightful Consequences, in Both Sexes Considered, with Spiritual and Physical Advice to those who have already injured themselves by this abominable practice. And reasonable Admonition to the Youth of the nation of Both Sexes," by John Martin (1712)

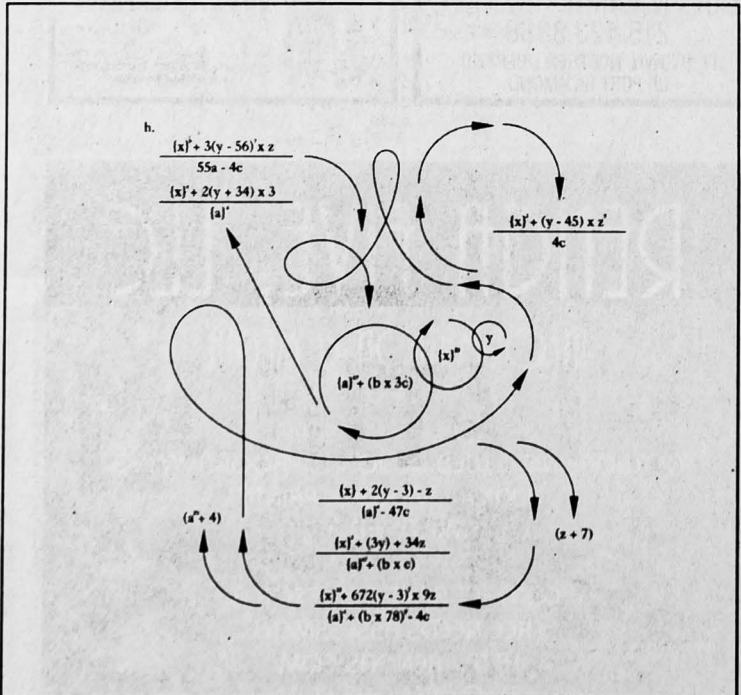
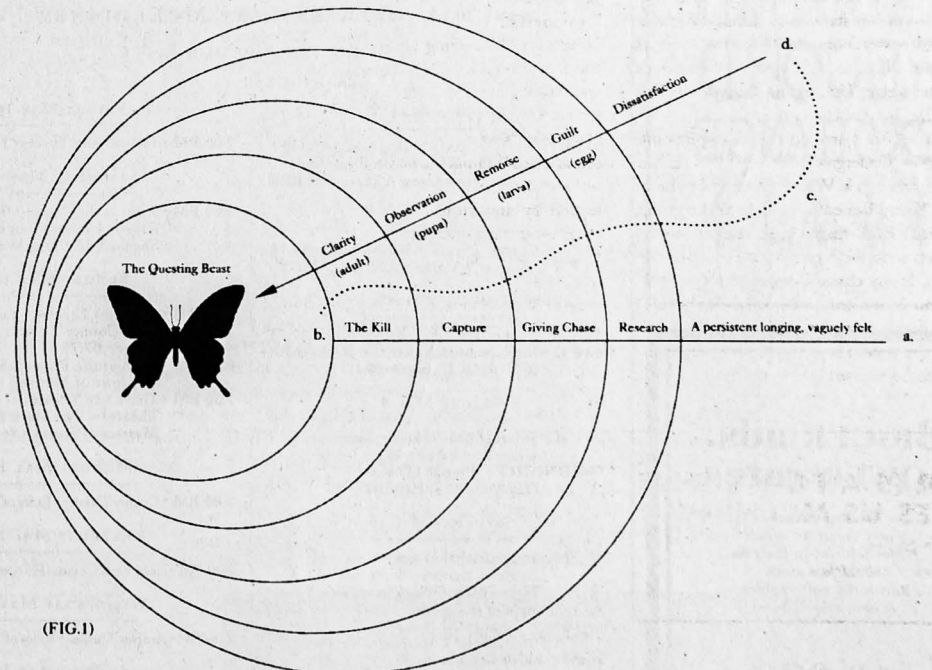


fig. h.) The Andalusian Pantyfish: Possibly the most complex and potentially dangerous method of self-gratification known. Only eleven people in the world are able to perform this 3-day long maneuver, and all of them, with the exception of Peter O'Toole, hold tenure at Princeton University's Institute for Advanced

Study (I tried it myself once, and quickly found out why academics have those patches on their jacket elbows). This maneuver single-handedly gave birth to the field of Quantum Onanism. Phillip Glass, Morton Feldman or Steven Reich essential, depending on your preferred tempo.

THE JOYS OF LEPIDOPTERY

or, HOW BUTTERFLIES and MOTHS IMPART WISDOM to THE FAMILY OF MAN through THE SACRAMENT OF THEIR FLESH (A ROMAN-A-CLEF)



The chart above depicts a journey of the soul, from the coarse trajectory of Callow Youth (a.) to that SELF-CULTIVATION (d.) and an APPRECIATION OF IDLENESS, inasmuch as it affords other beings to live in gentle accord within Nature's Peaceable Kingdom.

The Callow Youth feels a primal yearning for the hunt and a hunger for living beauty. He studies, stalks, and eventually captures his Prey, relishing each trophy, lovingly mounting each little jewel he captures. Gradually, he notices a hollow feeling derived from this activity, for the moments of felicity that attracted him to the Prey—their colorful dances over patches of wildflowers after a summer storm, or the entrancing nocturnal shadow dances cast upon sheared windows from a porchlight—are no longer in evidence. Once he

closes his killing jar. It is at this point that the Callow Youth might find his way to the second trajectory, that of SELF-CULTIVATION (d.), provided that he feels the hot steel of the FIRST WOUND (b.): a wave of remorse and self loathing for being an Agent of Banality, subtracting from Nature and diminishing Culture by robbing porcupines, pigeons, poets, and plumbers alike of being a privileged audience to the Prey that he steals from the dewy meadows. The fall from grace that is the FIRST WOUND (b.) is the portal through which the Callow Youth may ascend to a higher state.

The Callow Youth is then propelled by SHAME (c.) to the path of SELF-CULTIVATION (d.) whereby he embarks on the True Path, eventually forgiving himself and resolving to

appreciate the Prey on its own terms, not his own, and so learns the lessons that the Prey has to impart on the Youth, who is No Longer So Callow. Through his Prey he learns of Grace, Elegance, Joy, in the Simplicity of Being, and of existing simultaneously within the spheres of Nature and Culture. What was once his Prey has become the emblem of his own metamorphosis. In his breast is thence born the lifelong quest to become—like the Prey—a Living Work of Art, and ultimately the Youth basks in the gentle fervor that only the pursuit of becoming an Ambassador of Paradise can offer.

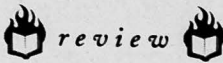
And so, having thus been chastened and awakened he pursues his true birthright. Lord Whimsy aka Alan Crawford is an Associate Editor of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.



THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO BUY A SOLID DESK

AVANT ROCK: EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC FROM THE BEATLES TO BJÖRK

By Bill Martin Franzen
Chicago: Open Court
2002



BY DAPHNE CARR

At some point in the mid-1960s, the hordes of Rock & Roll met the frightful character of Progress at a musical crossroads, and had to make a choice. The excitable soul-sellers turned down the road of Robert Johnson and met the endless repetition of the blues form. The rest took their guitars, basses and drums down another trail, one already cleared by avant-garde jazz musicians like Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and Sun Ra. Rock on this road picked up both the revolutionary politics and the experimental sounds of their jazz forbears and, of no small significance, the same loaded adjective: Avant.

To Bill Martin, avant rock is "rock music that is experimental, very creative, visionary, original, sometimes (but not always) hard to listen to, adventurous and challenging," which tellingly says little about how the music actually sounds. It is a music of ideas, he contends, and those ideas are often as important as the music itself. These ideas, having sprung from the art world, from radical philosophy, or from any other corner of 20th century intellectualism, became coupled in the late 1960s with the energy, instrumentation, and structures of rock & roll.

Since then avant rock has exploited and exploded nearly every element of traditional rock 'n roll. This has meant the use of the guitars as melodic or textural devices, though many avant rock artists, like Björk, eschew such traditional setups in favor of electronics or other instruments not traditionally associated with rock. It can also mean attention to and manipulation of the blues, like the work of Captain Beethart, or just as easily a complete dismissal of the form. Said simply, avant rock is rock music for those who "know better."

The roots of avant rock stretch back to the late 1960s, when commercial interests and artistic expression went somewhat in hand, and for a time the paths of traditionalism and experimentalism ran parallel. Venues like Bill Graham's Fillmore East hosted such cross-genre bills as a night featuring Miles Davis, The Steve Miller Band and Neil Young. In this era too, Warhol was ringmaster for his circus of downtown stars, musical and otherwise. He even coerced one of them, the German chanteuse Nico, to sing with fledgling rock band the Velvet Underground for his Plastic Exploding Inevitable showcases.

Martin, like many rock scholars, pinpoints the Velvet Underground's formation as the dawn of avant rock. When microtonal guru La Monte Young loaned John Cale to the group, Lou Reed's R&B-tinged street tales of depravity mixed with the forefront of classical composition. It was classic Warhol avant/pop synergy, and it worked, eventually. The results, though highly lauded now, were little appreciated at the time. The genre waited, like many things, to be released by the Beatles.

After a few years perfecting the yeah-yeah-yeah school of pop, the Fab Four slowly began the psychedelic experimentalism that would make them the true popular debutantes of avant rock. Martin finds a real world metaphor for this change in John Lennon's lessening affection for his first wife, Liverpool-born Cynthia Lennon, and in his growing fascination with and eventual marriage to Fluxus artist Yoko Ono, who Martin reminds us, "would have been a figure in the avant-garde scene, perhaps a major figure, had not a certain open-minded rock star taken an interest in her."

From that clash of working-class roots and avant garde aspirations, along with the Beatles' increasingly radicalized worldviews, came the symphonic *Sgt. Pepper's* and the white noise of "Revolution No. 9." Popular music was ripped from the blues form. In the face of these "overwhelming standards," every musician after the Beatles had to choose either to turn back or plunge into the unknown. The paths diverged.

So it was that in April of 1970—when the Beatles called it quits—rock music seemed at an end. Martin has written two books on music of the *what came next?* era, i.e. the '70s: *Listening to the Future: The Time of Progressive Rock and Music of Yes: Structure and Vision in Progressive Rock*. Both betray Martin's preoccupation with prog rock, a genre that for a time filled the terrifying rock unknown with manic tinges of free jazz, serialism, folk and other genres. Still, it was often everything but forward thinking. On the hundreds of thousands of Jethro Tull, Emerson Lake and Palmer, and Styx albums that flooded the markets and got cranked in basements, there were far more examples of stale intellectualism than of genuine genius.

Martin spends a significant amount of space defending prog rock in what becomes the main contradiction of his argument. In his history, avant rock was made in large part by inspired but often amateur performers. With prog, the split between the importance of technique and the potency of musical ideas comes to the fore. To explain, Martin sets revolutionary pianist Glenn Gould against conceptual composer John Cage. The latter, Martin argues, valued concept more than product and found recorded music meaningless, while Gould obsessed with bending his virtuosity with studio-spliced tape, and pushing technology beyond where human performance could go. That Cage was "first to the idea rather than the sound itself" implies a dismissal of musical technique, whereas Gould attempted its perfection by any means possible. For Martin, progressive rock succeeds in Gould's model through the triumph of skill without compromising cleverness. Yet, with the notable exceptions of Frank Zappa, early King Crimson, and a few others, prog rock often degenerated into flashy, overly technical performance of songs that, at their core, were woefully traditional.

Ask any music fan why Rush is so great. Chances are, they won't mention bassist Geddy Lee's brilliant musical ideas.

Just as Martin sides with the unlikely Gould, so he dismisses punk out of hand. In killing progressive rock's ostentation, punk reduced technique to a minimum. Punk's manifesto of "three chords and a dream" might as well be a John Cage chance operation, and so it was that the genre readjusted the importance of ideas in music. As Martin points out, early punk leaned towards a reductionist blues form in bands like the Heartbreakers, but he fails to grapple with the thought that many of these artists were not merely significant as creators of sound, but as performers and personalities. Even the seemingly troglodyte Sex Pistols, under the direction of Malcolm McLaren, injected Dada and Situationist antics and ideas into their music. Martin hasn't the patience to investigate whether punk's infusion of radicalism and ideology could compensate for its often primitive technique.

Martin gets excited again when punk becomes "no wave," an insider form born in the

tion to explode. It is from here that modern avant rock emerged.

Though Martin places his primary focus on the conceptual roots of avant rock, he still attempts a full chronology of the genre into the modern era, and herein lies the book's downfall. Martin avoids discussing the touring, recording and distribution networks of the underground that so shaped the mid to late '80s, excellently traced in Michael Azerrad's *This Band Could Be Your Life*. Sonic Youth is posited simply as a conscious New York-ism, a spontaneous manifestation of the avant rock world with no precedent or relation to less experimental underground rock. Sonic Youth's subsequent influence on '90s rock, avant and otherwise, is then seen as the result of some sort of cult-like fascination rather than part of a larger legacy of acknowledged influence, collaboration and shared history that is so much a part of other musical traditions, like jazz. Martin's obsession with documenting avant rock's essential canon, evident in the abundant lists of required listening that mark each section, falters with his exclusion of labels like SST and Dischord, British and Japanese noise artists, electro, hip hop and wildcard sounds like those of Jad Fair.

Also lost is any sense of avant rock's place in the musical spectrum, the "So What?" factor so often lacking from academic writing about rock music. In mentioning the hipster chameleon tendencies of artists like Björk, who Martin signals as a high-point in avant rock, the book begins to address one of the genre's primary functions: to serve as a lab from which musical ideas boil up into the mainstream. Martin's naïveté, throughout the book, is thinking of such artists and trends as part of a benevolent sharing of ideas, as if music making were an open source activity. The book might have been enhanced if it engaged the very tangible reality that new or challenging music is often a valuable commodity in a mature market. Most avant rock is more marginalized than during the heyday of '60s psychedelia, but it also has a sustainable home with the many independent labels around the world. When avant rock songs pop up in commercials or are recontextualized in smooth-edged pop, they appear like blips from another world.

This function of avant rock, bracing against the mainstream with the secret hope and continual possibility of revitalizing it, is perhaps too cynical for Martin to suggest. He is a theory man, a historian, and obviously more dedicated to ponderings on *avant* than those on *rock*. With a solid history and introduction to the pop philosophers (Warhol, Gould, Cage) who have so affected avant thought, and thus music, in the last fifty years, Martin's *Avant Rock* presents an official history of a highly unofficial genre, one whose complexity and potential for revelation deserves a response from someone willing to listen harder, to listen to more, and to listen with the truly open ears that it takes to hear.

Daphne Carr is a writer based in Philadelphia.



same early '80s New York City scene as painter Jean-Michel Basquiat. The movement consisted of art students who, "while inspired by the raucous energy and intensity of punk, were less impressed by what it amounted to as a way of making music...[and] wanted to combine two things that may or may not go together: the intensity that comes from the best of punk's in-the-moment/in-your-face anti-aesthetic, and a largeness of a musical project." In other words, the Gould/Cage dichotomy re-emerged with a new set of cultural references and a new tradi-

the French and Algerians became during Algeria's war for independence.

For many who participate in war, the fighting gives a sense of purpose and meaning, both good and bad, that they will never again experience. That's why some veterans cannot adequately explain the intensity of their wartime experiences. Many First World War veterans I knew could *never* talk about that war.

The ancient Greeks were first to understand another quality of war: its near-sexual power. For them, death and love—*Thanatos* and *Eros*—were inextricably entwined. Sigmund Freud understood this too, writing in *Civilization and its Discontents* about the conflict between the human instincts toward Love and Death.

Even for people who are deeply religious—perhaps, especially for them—war can fill a vast spiritual vacuum. When happiness is ephemeral, life can be devoid of meaning. War fills the voids and gives profound purpose for those who wage it. It can have the same effect for those who sit, glued to TV, lusting for each CNN-delivered scrap from the front, even when we suspect it may be propaganda and therefore not to be treated too seriously. A powerful new book, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, written by Pulitzer Prize-winning *New York Times* reporter, Chris Hedges, should be required reading for everyone who is fasci-

nated by Gulf War Two. Hedges is no pacifist, just someone who's covered many conflicts worldwide, and is reflective enough to question his (mixed) reactions to war.

Hedges says Aristotle claimed only two beings were capable of "complete solitude" or "complete separateness"—God and beast. Aristotle said loneliness was the "most acute form of suffering for human beings" because the isolated can never be fully human. "And many of war's most fervent adherents are those atomized individuals who, before war came, were profoundly alone and unloved. They found fulfillment in war, perhaps because it was the closest they came to love," Hedges writes.

When war begins, as it did last month in shock and awe, it looks and feels like a form of love and meaning. But, as Hedges says, "unlike love it gives nothing in return but an ever-deepening dependence, like all narcotics, on the road to self-destruction.... It takes a higher and higher dose to achieve any thrill."

When war ends, the addiction turns appalling. Former warriors frequently feel "soiled and spent." Despair in the form of severe psychological problems afflicts both winners and losers. Hedges says one third of Israeli "casualties" in the 1973 Arab-Israeli war were "due to psychiatric causes."

That war only lasted a few weeks. In longer

Wars, like the First and Second World Wars, an overwhelming proportion of soldiers became psychiatric casualties. "When we spend long enough in war it comes to us as a kind of release, a fatal and seductive embrace that can consummate the long flirtation with war with our own destruction," Hedges claims.

In the end, when war completely seizes our senses, it wipes out *Eros*. That is why rampaging armies rape enemy women, torture or kill indiscriminately, raze villages and why pure power becomes the only coin in the Kingdom of War. The state-given license of soldiers to kill often gives an orgasmic release to the killer, one the less-hardened will spend the rest of their lives coping with.

That's partly why philosophers from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas to Immanuel Kant have thought long and hard to discover what makes some wars "just" and others "unjust."

And it's why, in a dispatch from the field of battle at Waterloo, one of the greatest warriors ever, the Duke of Wellington, wrote, "Nothing except a battle lost can be half so melancholy as a battle won." The Iron Duke knew whereof he spoke.

Brian Flemming writes regular weekly columns for The Daily News of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and AOL Canada. He is Chairman of the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority.

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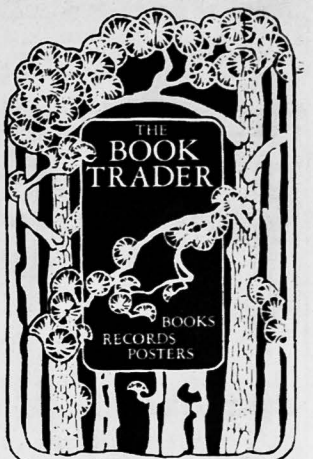
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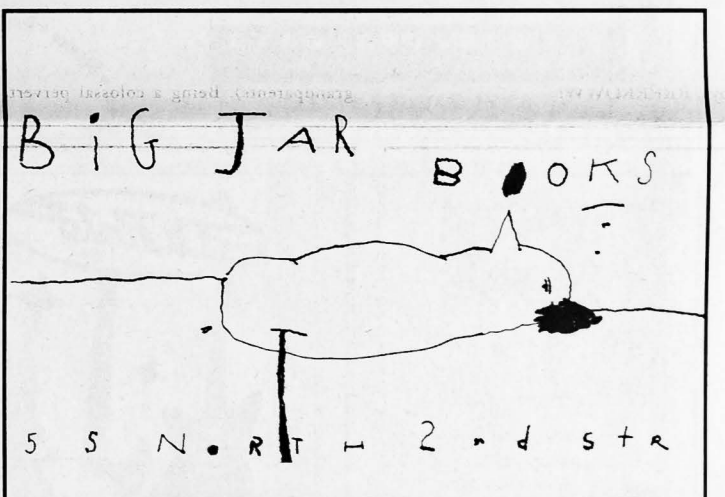
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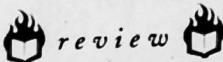
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WAR IS A FORCE THAT GIVES US MEANING

By Chris Hedges
New York: Public Affairs
2002



BY BRIAN FLEMMING

General Robert E. Lee once said it was good war was so terrible, otherwise people might come to love it too much. They might, like General George Patton of Second World War fame, passionately prefer war to peace.

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TRIALS OF A BEER STEWARD

Don't forget your acronyms or your flashlight when judging the homebrew contest.

BY JEN SHIMONY



Last month BONES (Brewers of the Northeast Section) held their annual homebrew contest at Victory Brewpub in Downingtown, PA. I served as a beer steward, fetching homebrew and fresh cups for the beer judges. Yes. That's right. Beer judges. A group surpassed in luck only by chocolate tasters and mattress testers. They might not be the coolest kids in school, but they're not complaining. In fact, some of the judges bordered on the downright nerdy. They all looked somewhat alike. They're like Elvis impersonators. None of them really look like Elvis, but they all look like each other.

How does one achieve such a station in life? You take a grueling four hour test. You must be well-versed in hop varieties, indigenous beer styles, and brewing terms and equipment. Some chemistry and physics wouldn't hurt either. You should know your IBU's (international bittering units) better than your ABC's.

The contest wasn't the raucous, rollicking, foam-covered beer-fest that one might expect. These guys were serious. They showed up at 8:30 on a Saturday morning, filled out their registration and started tasting. Each sip was thoughtful. They whiffed and swirled, carefully examining the fruits of each dedicated homebrewer's labor. Many judges pulled tiny flashlights from their pockets and

keychains to check for signs of sediment (perfectly acceptable in wheat beers) at the bottoms of the bottles. They made notes on color, bouquet, mouthfeel, and flavor, thoughtfully weighing one beer in a category against its competitors. Some of the judges loosened up a little after the first couple of flights, offering stewards occasional tastes of particularly offensive beer.

"Hey, wanna taste some really crappy beer?"

Who can turn down an invitation like that? Well, they were right. There were lots of crappy beers. There were some stellar beers too. One particularly fine biere d'garde, a rare, French-style celand beer took Best of Show.

After it was over and the ribbons and prizes were handed out, many of the judges and homebrewers belled up the bar at Victory to sample their delightful wares. This time they gulped with gusto and kept their flashlights in their pockets. This time, they just enjoyed themselves. After all, isn't what beer is for in the first place?

Brew beer. Amaze your friends. If you'd like to give homebrewing a try, start with a simple American Pale Ale such as this one from George Hummel, beer writer and proprietor of Home Sweet Homebrew.

Jen Shimony is a writer based in Philadelphia.

from SPRING, page 1

How is it possible to pin down or manipulate this quality, which is fundamentally subjective? Only man, with his sophisticated logic and enterprising desire for immortality, could turn this evocative question into a multi-billion-dollar industry. Sex does not escape man's impulse to subvert and control that which he cannot understand. On the contrary, the unnerving, pervasive mystery of sexuality courts this basic impulse exactly as one individual courts another: With desire not only to understand, but transform.

It is this same primal impulse towards transformation and subversion that brings us the modern metropolis. What is a city, but man's attempt to pave over nature for his own convenience? The entire point of living in a city is convenience: Access to transportation, housing, sources of income, and a wide variety of others with whom to strike up acquaintance. Fortunately for our inherent desire to impress ourselves upon the surface provided by nature, convenience requires a lot of cement, steel, fiberglass, brick, wire, plaster, and other transforming agents. These materials, while making everyone's lives easier, are not exactly conducive to the sort of pastoral glory one finds, come spring, in the country. Instead, we have sad-looking tulips transplanted into flower boxes, patches of Hi-Liter green grass sprouting between cracks in the sidewalk, the cotton-candy spectacle of cherry blossom trees given to us as gifts from other countries, and of course, the pervasive, suggestive waft of the flowering pear. It isn't as though we don't have nature in the city. That would be impossible, since the city is supported by nature; built unceremoniously on top of it. We'll never fully be rid of it. As proof we have a host of reminders perhaps less charming than our prepackaged horticulture: Cockroaches, crawling between infinitesimal cracks in our basements to flourish among us, pigeons, who have made a livelihood of our trash, and mildew, whose influence creeps between the tiles of even the most pristine shower. Nature prevails, despite man's Promethean efforts to tame it, transform it, make it his own.

Just as the original dirt under the city is obscured by concrete and steel, human sexuality is constantly in danger of losing itself beneath the mask of mass standards encouraged by a bloated media and a warped set of social values that tout conformity as the only thing worth having. The type of acute self-consciousness bred by consumer hyperstimulation is the beady-eyed, calculating enemy of

our inherent right to act upon an instinct basic to the very survival of our species. When sex is sold to the general populace in an airbrushed series of Victoria's Secret catalogs, Volkswagen commercials, Christina Aguilera videos, and celebrity gossip magazines, it is sold under the pretense that the average person is incapable of generating his/her own sexuality and therefore must purchase it. Our most clandestine and fragile insecurities are being preyed upon for profit: Fear that we are secretly abnormal, left out on the punch line of some possibly hilarious cosmic joke, too much or not enough, unpalatable to our audiences, ill-informed, deformed, grotesque, generally loathsome in thought, word, and deed, terminally weird, and furthermore, really, really bad lays. The all-loving, all-accepting embrace of capitalist culture spews forth a barrage of overt sexual imagery under the guise of reassurance and helpfulness, providing us with a script of products and mannerisms to aid us in our quest for Normal Sex, the Kind Everyone Else Has. Ostensibly, this is meant to assuage, or at least camouflage, our various carnal neuroses by creating a readily identifiable standard for sex. The only glitch in this system of compassionate conformity, encouraged and endorsed by our consanguine media comrades, is the oversight of basic human individuality and its mandatory role in sex.

There is no need for sanitized, desensitized, over-processed sex among the ranks of those who, deep down in their inner thighs, still know better, despite the endless parade of media propaganda that would remove sex from the people who should be having it and place it in the hands of corporate conglomerates, advertising agencies, J. Lo, Ben Affleck, and government think tanks. We all know that sex is not worth having if the specific, unique individuality involved is not the driving force behind the act. Our biological urges towards procreation are smarter, stronger, and more sensitive than the mess of media signals that might otherwise appear threatening. As individuals, we will always respond first to other individuals in sexual relationships, no matter how much media-inflicted social sludge we have to crawl through to get there. Why not teach ourselves to trust our instincts? Now is the perfect time: These trees that smell like sex provide us with a potent olfactory reminder of nature's tenacity. Like a hundred-year-old root that destroys the sidewalk above it by force of natural destiny, our individuality is a birthright that assumes itself.

Loren Hunt is Senior Editor at THE INDEPENDENT.

Just a little note: Gilles de Rais raped and murdered somewhere between 150 and 800 children. He saved a few who would later work for him. His trial is famous because it seemed the people were concerned about his soul and cried for him as he expressed his remorse. Before these events, he fought beside Joan of Arc in the Hundred Year War.

In fond Memory of Gilles de Rais

Gilles, I could not wait for you to come back. The family house caught on the former way, disturb stirred. I would not say I was pleased to leave the castle, but away was always calling and one must make one's way, somehow.

You were not for the old world yourself back then. No feast-eater you, no bishop dissembler. We met in my grandfather's forest to hunt. Only for your approval were charges into low branches delightful.

You witnessed the end of my line. I would have noticed too had my head not always been under your hand, my ear turned towards your mouth's command. I was the one who would do anything at all for you. Someone the pages disdain.

True, my house had had it: the silk refused to train, Smith's could not bear inscribe our crest in silver for the mess it made. Our servants, I thought they liked to breakfast in the stables, rather, they'd infested the food, kept an outer view to see with glee our staggering outside. Hitting the stones in the dirt stomach first.

My brothers all became monks. My sisters stopped caring for heirs. You quit calling too for the curse it might cause you. Finally stealing away, honor in arms. You claimed, your Grace, to be in for things superior. Perhaps not of this world.

Whereas I joined the boys on their way to the sea. They were in it for Faith but I was for the Ocean (no one would know I never said anything about anything though they would say how it was all a matter for Jesus or something. They were going far away to say this to others to save souls.

Whereas, I thought, I'll stay on the boat. I will be a traveling soul: I have been seeing idiots hit the road all my life and all my life I knew I was seeing this because I too would end up a-wandering. Trying to forget the way my love has been belittled by my squawking mouth, or graceless body, or rumbling bowels.

What about me do you remember now? No. You will be killing the other children traditionally after sticking it to. You will be recasting vast operas of the battles you sort of lost. You will not be thinking of me at all having gone your way towards destiny.

You will challenge them all their Christian forgiveness. Asking for mercy after horrendous forays into the child's sexual circuitry. You will be called a beast; I say that but I love you. You create as God does vast capacities. Someone with the power who uses it—
what I wouldn't give.

Like how the world happened at first: they were children, the people in the garden; they were disturbed basically by the one who made them. And I hope the willful mold maker will get his; if the so-called good people ever get powerful. It is doubtful.

Gilles— Is that you? A rat scratches underneath tonight as usual. Aren't you everywhere? I am not sweet or funny anymore really I think I know about people now. Gilles, you are one of the monsters who created the world.

Now in the ship's hold I sleep beside an eight year old. Some men are steering us and putting us to task. I scramble around like a fool, as usual. At night, I get a chance to go unnoticed and soft I say your name to put it here.

Someone could hear it and you'd be in them too. A trace.

I know we are going to hell. I know the men who've taken us on are going to rope us into something very subservient. Many kids onboard are sick already.

Imagine the sicknesses to come: the different rivers with their special fetid slime; they will get our senses festering. And there will be bugs who get into our brains and swell.

They will tell us to get out! (our souls) from their house (our hides)

You are everywhere: sitting on my stomach or on my back; making me hate my vessel.

It's okay, I must have always hated it in a way if I would hate it at all.

So this must be the real me emptied of all objection.

A girl going along with the boys who are silent for the moment.

We should sink this ship. We might really be better off dead.

But they love Jesus like I love you though we all know we are left alone now

we made agreements to belong to one who will see us as apt and so expand to fill our every gap

If I die before he comes back I guess I have in my mind the face of the creator

etched in each eye, the dark like before which at least is quiet

— ISH KLEIN

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from NEPAL, page 1



ies will often make the handrail unnecessary. Keep aware of your wallet, and watch out for creeping fingers if you are not seeking rare and exotic intimate contact with your Nepalese brethren. In addition to private space, your fellow rider will also challenge your ingrained sense of private property. Once I was looking at a freshly developed roll of film when someone next to me asked to see it. Surprised, and a bit bemused, I gave it to him. In minutes my photos were being passed all around the bus, discussed, and then carefully passed back to me. Other valuables are sometimes shared, such as when a standing mother passed her baby to strangers to momentarily lighten the load and adjust her sari. The personal and the private are strictly negotiable in Nepal, and there is no better place to learn this than on the afternoon bus home.

SUBJECTS

After forty minutes in the stifling pre-monsoon heat, the bus has thankfully turned off the Ring Road that encircles Kathmandu's sprawling growth and is rolling into Chabel. Without the electronic bells and whistles of an American bus, Nepalis signal that they want to exit by banging loudly on the bus's metal roof. One loud bang means stop; two by the young bus boy tells the driver to go. Don't get these signals confused.

Before leaving riders must settle their bill, a final instance of the bus's wonderful ambiguities. Tell the boy where you got on and he will calculate how much you owe. Minimum fare for even a single block is five rupees (about seven cents); if you have gone a bit farther it's six, and so on. It is a very precise system despite being completely unwritten. It is also not an entirely harmonious way to run a business, and the preteen boys and the passengers occasion-

ally have heated arguments. Only by riding the same route several times can you understand what the proper fare "should" be. Eventually your mind will concoct an internal meter of proper fares, to sit neatly in the cockpit beside your internal map of the bus routes. To learn the Kathmandu bus system is to enter a system based on custom, like an esoteric cult, but one that is by definition fully public. Finding appropriate systems is the challenge of expatriate living, and it helps avoid the twin pitfalls of getting lost in your own personal "self-discovery"—too limited a system—or getting lost in the dizzying complexity of the host culture—too large a system. The joy of this process comes from the fact that the public bus system is an appropriate size, difficult at first, but possible to master with time. In contrast, taking a Nepali taxi feeds both pitfalls by allowing the traveler to effortlessly string together significant cultural sites, too incomprehensible to really grasp as a transient backpacker, while simultaneously providing the type of isolating environment that encourages undue "introspection." The public bus is the hot tip that everyone knows, the secret society that everyone is a part of, so before you get too carried away, remember that mastering this insider system is only special because of your outsider's status. It's all part of the expatriate experience—nothing you can do except find the proper systems, learn them patiently, and perhaps give a kindly wink to the dreadlocked backpacker next to you at the curb as you swing aboard the bus to Chabel and rumble off.

Ian Huntington worked last year at a small patient advocacy Non-Governmental Organization outside of Kathmandu. He now resides in Allston, Massachusetts.

from HAVANA, page 1

I have not been surprised when this sympathy pours over into their perception of the turmoil in American politics—they are sorry to see us suffer, and they know what it is to take ridicule of one's country and government personally. But it is perverse, if I consider it, to be consoled so much by the subjects of an autocrat, on the topic of the health of my own democracy. Yet this is the direction the sympathy flows here, from South to North, in spite of History.

The Cubans know the difficulty we face in arriving upon their shores in search of the pleasures of travel, as surely as we have heard of the difficulty they face in arriving on ours, in search of a life worth living. There is no comparison. As unconstitutionally preposterous as the quasi-prohibition of American travel to Havana may be, it is only an approximation of the universal restrictions imposed on the movements of Castro's citizens. Thus, stepping off an airplane in Havana, clutching one's black-market boarding-pass and his unstamped passport, one is instantly more understanding of the plight of the Cuban citizen and the cunning necessary to even subsist here; but such understanding can only go so far. And yet when I announce the country of my origin, I inevitably fall behind in the exchange of sympathy. I am still perplexed by the nuance of the idea: to know just how tumultuous and unwell the United States currently is, and to still crave it and honor it without compare. It is enough to make a demagogue want to hurry home and get to work.

While I have been here, two airplanes have been hijacked from the airport and brought, by the pin of a grenade, to Florida. Also, the ferryboat that plies the five-minute route between the two sides of Havana harbor was seized at knifepoint, and motored thirty miles out into the Straits of Florida before it ran out of gas, and the perpetrators were apprehended. Dr. Castro, following the lead of his autocratic protégé in Washington, has declared these acts Terrorism, and has thus had a free reign in enforcing his punishment for it. While those Cubans who made it to Florida will serve five to ten years in American jails for air piracy, the trio who was captured aboard the ferryboat was executed not yet a week after their crime was committed, as an example to others. In Washington, the Bush administration finds itself without a response consistent with their remorseless bellicosity, and still supportive of the minimal human rights they would like to defend in such a matter (especially as the undisclosed number of Afghan and Arab prisoners still while away their time at Camp X-Ray, in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, of all places—accused of much the same vague crime, and as scantily protected by international convention).

The problem is, at its heart, that the recent prosecution in Cuba of the anti-dissent laws is largely the result of American meddling. The single American diplomat here, James Cason, a Bush appointee, has made a habit of going on television and naming those Cuban activists with whom he had been—secretly, they thought—meeting. He thus incited Dr. Castro to arrest them (upwards of seventy-five such friends of Mr. Cason have now been apprehended), and the administration foolishly expects the Cuban people to rise up in arms. This is not even a remote option, a thing immediately clear to anyone who has even had an overnight here. Instead, those opponents of the regime who think they are likely next to the gulag become afraid and desperate, and seize boats and planes, endangering themselves and the civilians on board. Once this sort of measure has been resorted to, it is all too simple for Comandante en Jefe to mete out the ultimate punishment under the premise of fighting the War against Terrorism, leaving the U.S. flabbergasted and useless, too afraid of being called hypocritical to stand up, even once, for what is right and honorable.

This accounts for the political climate here, but I cannot conclude without pointing out to my housebound readers what a minute fraction of Cuban life is concerned with such things. Life is much too challenging here, from hour to hour, to spend one's mental energy contemplating the machinations of officials and generals. I have said everybody here knows, somehow, what is the latest from the Middle East; but they do not preoccupy themselves with it. Yet nobody here is a defeatist or a fatalist; on the contrary, I sense less resignation here than I did on the streets in New York during the long run-up to the fighting. Either the climate here is as favorable to the cultivation of optimism as it is to bananas and sugar, or the political philosophy that has evolved here—patience and fortitude—is not as simplistic as my sensibilities made me think at first, but is instead like the pure pragmatism that carried our own country through its worst times, and hopefully will again. A healthful, sensible United States is the best hope for beleaguered Cuba; the deteriorated state of this marvelous place is all the more evidence that our own affairs are far from well-handled.

Henry William Brownjohns founded and edited *Three Weeks*, a newspaper, in Queens, New York.

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FREE BAND NAMES: King Oscar, In Soya Oil, Merriam Webster, Let It Ride, Mary and Barry, Financialized, Liquefied, Vartan Gregorian, Prudential Centaur, Tchukamuk, Bangor and the Rhino Thieves, Riverhorse [a Neil Young cover band], Raistlin, the Grapes, the Names, the Napes, the Apes, the Tapes, Small Professor, Unicorn, Pegasus, Tsongas, Skinless and Boneless, Now Softer, Pure Cane, the Bowels, Being in such, How People Could, the Tints, the Hues, Supreme Mammal of Paradise, Lord of the Ocean Sea, Sissy Emeritus and Obi-Wan Discombobulator.

MOTORCYCLES FOR SALE: Go faster than the speed of your feet!! 1988ZX750 - \$500; 1977CB360T - \$850; 215-732-5534

MUSIC FOR SALE: Julie CD has been re-pressed, after being repressed! Remember the great San Diego band from back in the mid 1990s? Remember Cabbage Collective shows? The CD has been tastefully repackaged (In Banana Peels!) to the exacting specifications of Bloodlink Records (the Philly label that everyone forgets is from Philly), and is available at all fine anti-corporate record stores like Spaceboy, Repo, Relapse, Wooden Shoe... Also check out www.stickfiguredistro.com <http://www.stickfiguredistro.com>. Other Bloodlink Stuff = Lost Film Festival comp. volumes 1, 2, & 3. | An Albatross' eat Lightning. Shit thunder'. www.bloodlink.com

PARTY: Beer drinkers and rumpshakers wanted! Disorder - May 24th at 218 south street \$4 - Stacie and Labuda provide the music to get you in the mood to smash the state. Punkrock vs hip-hop vs whatever-the-hell else we wanna play. Plus secret guest dj's and ch33p drinks. Up the punx! Boy/grrrl revolution now!

PERIODICAL FOR SALE: Poets' Groove #101 out now! Fiction, photography, poetry, and photocopy-manipulation art from the mind of S. Sebastian Petrus. 36 pages of amazement. \$2 or a trade. 4811 Springfield Ave. Philadelphia, PA 19143 poets-groove@yahoo.com.

PERSONAL: Ninjas Know!!!!!! - dusty lipschitz

PERSONAL: i :heart:: anne // 09*27*03

PERSONAL: My girlfriend rules. * metal.

PERSONAL: AJ: The past four years have been one wonderful surprise after another. You continue to amaze me. Love, Robbie

PING PONG TABLE WANTED: I want to buy your Ping Pong Table. Call 267-879-1059.

ROOM FOR RENT: Looking for vegan, drug free, non smoker, pro dumpster diving, bike riding, conscious, eclectic, artistic...yet handy, skilled & responsible! (is this a possible combo?). In the delicious Kookville area of West Philly (44th and Ludlow). \$300 month +utils. Liz liz@evilwinbook.com 317 440 8619, or Scott scott@lostfilmfest.com.

SPACE FOR RENT: I am buying a firehouse in West Philadelphia that has a farmer's market on the first floor. Are you interested in doing "anything" on the second floor-office space, live/work, studio space? If so, contact me at george@gbalpin.com or 215.729.4770. There will be renovation ongoing, but it is in habitable/workable condition already. Not available until August, but interested in showing anytime before then.

STATIONARY AND OFFICE SUPPLIES: I will pay you cash for your old office supplies and reams of useless stationary with strange old letterheads. Please email supplies@phindie.com.

STUFF WANTED: I will pay top dollar for all of your Martin Lawrence or Good Burger Merchandise. Email Richie at richiehunterhangshimself@yahoo.com. Also looking to purchase two candelabras and prayer mat for use in the building of a Martin Lawrence shrine.

TRAVEL ADVICE WANTED: I will be travelling to Poland and the Czech Republic this summer. I will be based out of Lublin, Poland, before travelling to Prague. If you can, for each city recommend sites to visit, restaurants to dine, and beers to sample, it would be greatly appreciated. Contact me at arielba@yas.upenn.edu.

VENUE WANTED: Multimedia poetry performance troupe looking for venues in the Philly area. R.e.p.o. is also interested in collaborating with visual artists and installations, and tuba players. for info: please call stevenallenmay 215-732-2663 or zen3zen@wongfaye.com.

WEBSITE: www.hailsocial.com, booking, news, and mp3s

WEBSITE: Philly punk and post punk discography 1977-1985 at http://www.geocities.com/loworb/

WELDER WANTED: Welder needed to repair aging deck furniture. Housscalls a must. Can pay cash. Call Joel 215-351-0509.

Each wall in our town, I feel, should remain as safe and secure as my youngest grandson as he rests peacefully in the very crib in which my father once slept. Our walls, utility poles, and traffic signs, if they are to demand the respect of passersby and visiting Bostonians, should, exempting normal weathering, appear as pristine as on the afternoon of their unveiling.

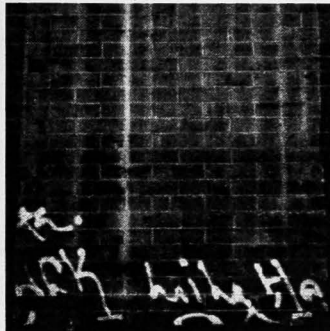
Sadly, there exists in our ranks a sorry bunch of sour apples that insists on defacing the concrete, brick, and steel that lines our noble avenues.

In my duty as Founder and Coordinator of the Vandal! Justiniani, I intend to use this space (which THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT has graciously donated) to advocate the forced conscription of these ill-mannered spraypainters and chickenscratchers into a special unit of the United States Military which will be responsible for erecting and maintaining shelters in developing nations. This ought to instill some respect into these urban parasites.

If you know whose hand scrawled these abominations in our city, please alert me care of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT.

-Henry Floss

MARKINGS



PHOTOS: DAN MURPHY

FINDINGS

FROM THE CURB TO YOUR LIVING ROOM

A Biblical Description of Hell
Hell is a filthy, stinking, decaying, void where nothing place reserved for the agony, pain and torment of the LIVING DEAD.

- A place of crying
- A place of weeping
- A place of no rest
- A place of no water
- A place of no mercy
- A place of torment
- A place of cursing God
- A place of a lake of fire
- A place of the wickedness pit
- A place of fire and brimstone
- A place of eternal punishment
- A place where worms never die
- A place where people pray to God
- A place where people cheer their sinners
- A place where blackness and darkness are forever
- A place where you don't want your loved ones to go

The second one drops into hell they will hear millions upon millions of people screaming and crying out in unbearable pain from the burning, torturous fires of hell.

Some will be begging and screaming for mercy
Some will be begging for water to cool them off
Some will be begging to God to relieve their pain
Some will be begging God to take them to heaven
Some will be begging God to take them out of Hell



I Beg You, Don't Go to Hell!

FOUND: Broad and Vine

FOUND: 18th and Kater

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Fri. 5/9-----8PM-Andrew Lam-10PM-Sola
Sat. 5/10-----ZENBUDDHA #5
Sun. 5/11-----Songs of Living CD Release feat. Dan Taylor & Kelly Meashy
Mon. 5/12-----SLO & SHAKEY
Thurs. 5/15-----Bradford Trojan- Apache Grip
Fri. 5/16-----7pm-Harold Smith
Sat. 5/17-----Subtle Ground - Disciples of Discipline - Ziplok - Oaxeral
Thurs. 5/22-----HARD LIQUOR THEATER
Fri. 5/23-----DR KETCHUP-FRED F. HOPPER
Sat. 5/24-----Sonny Fortune- Rashied Ali
Sun. 5/25-----The Treehouse Project
Mon. 5/26-----"Small Change" The Music of Tom Waits
Fri. 5/30-----Psychobilly-Hippies & Hillbillies
Sat. 5/31-----Jammaaladeen Tacumass' DNA Galleria

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Friday May 9, 7 PM - Fiction
Mat Johnson author of *Hunting in Harlem* (\$23.95 Bloomsbury)
"Mat Johnson's breathless thriller cuts to the heart of gentrification. Hunting in Harlem shakes up the issues of urban blight and asks, How far do you go to set it right? Implausibly humorous, righteously terrifying, Johnson has written a contemporary cautionary tale for our time." - Walter Mosely

Sunday March 11, 2 PM - Non-Fiction
Andrea J. Buchanan author of *Mother Shock* (\$14.95, Seal Press)
According to Andrea Buchanan, "mother shock" is the state in which many new parents exist during those first confusing, chaotic, and often comical years of parenting. It is the clash between expectation and reality, theory and reality; a twilight zone of 24-hour-a-day living where life is no longer neatly divided into day and night

Thursday May 15, 7 PM
Jordan Ellenberg author of *Grasshopper King* (\$14.00, Coffee House Press)
In this debut novel about treachery, death, academia, marriage, mythology, history, and truly horrible poetry, Jordan Ellenberg creates a world complete with its own geography, obscure folklore, and absurdly endearing characters- a world where arcane subjects flourish and the smallest swerve from convention can result in immortality.

Sunday March 18, 2 PM - Poetry
Josey Foo author of *Tomie's Chair* (\$13.95, Kaya)
"Tomie's Chair is an indefinable work. More choreography than inscription as though air were the page on which it were written. As though composed out of doors. The chair is the most specific object in the field; it centers the field, but the chair is light and the center movers. A new work by Josey Foo maintains a beautiful fidelity to the space between objects, beings, words and honors its own immanence with her deft, invisible burh." - C.D. Wright

Monday May 19, 7 PM - Readings
The Women's Writing and Spoken Word Series
Helen W. Mallon and poet/Spoken Word Artist Walidah Imarisha
Curated and hosted by Cassandre Xavier, celebrates women in the craft of multi-genre writing. All voices, veteran and bougeoning, are encouraged to participate. Interested? Sign up on the mailing list or send a 30-word bio and brief writing sample to FYBPProductions@hotmail.com 215.574.2129
Co-ed open reading and Q&A to follow.

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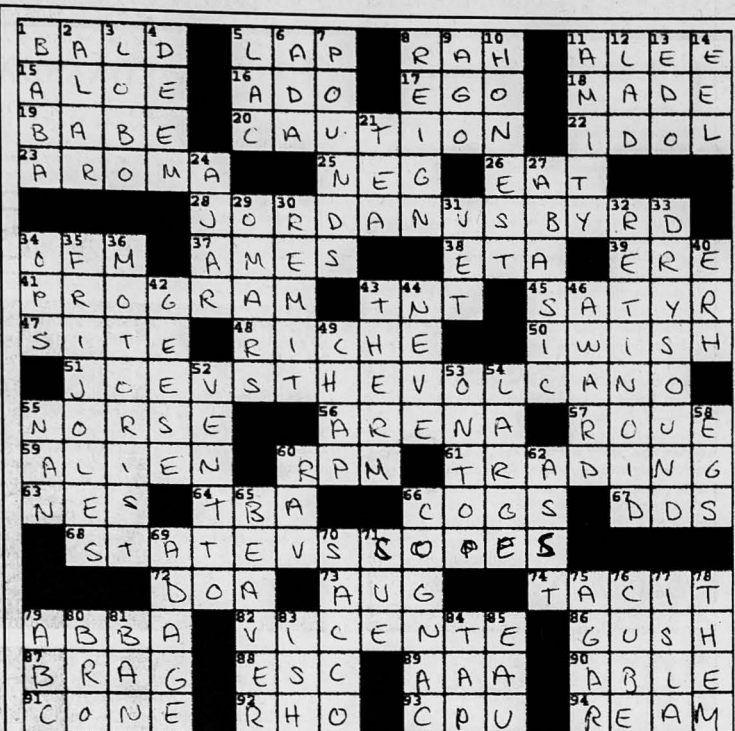
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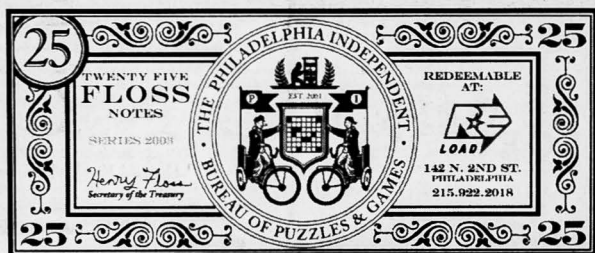
LAST MONTH'S NOODLE EXERCISE



KEY:

TOP SECRET AGENT means a perfect score
SECRET AGENT means just one mistake
SPECIAL AGENT means for than one mistake

FIRST PRIZE -- \$100 FLOSS NOTES AT R.E.LOAD BAGGAGE



(four way tie)

1. M.J. Fine, Top Secret Agent
2. team of Eve Manz, James Muspratt, Patrick Thrasher, Top Secret Agents.
3. Tamara Manik-Perlman, Top Secret Agent
4. Michael Fahy, Top Secret Agent

SECOND PRIZE -- A HOT BREAKFAST

Neal Ramirez for his essay on Fame & Rivalry

THIRD PRIZE -- A SIX-ISSUE RIZZO SUBSCRIPTION TO THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT

Martha Cross, Top Secret Agent
Adriana DiFranco, Secret Agent
Kate Duncan, Secret Agent
Michael Heinzer, Secret Agent
Doug Hungarter, Secret Agent
Stuart McCaughey, Special Agent
Sarah Wood, Secret Agent

RUNNERS UP

Daniel Brook, Special Agent
Stuart McCaughey, Special Agent
Tanya Nagahat, Special Agent
Jan & Eliza, Special Agents

NOTE: In the future, team efforts will be disqualified. I'm sorry folks, I know there are a lot of puzzle teams out there, but it's unfair to the people who have the guts to tackle the puzzles alone. This wasn't clearly stated in the rules for the last puzzle first time, and should not be construed to be taking anything away from the enormous amount of hard work and perfect results generated on this last puzzle by Top Secret Agents Manz, Muspratt & Thrasher as well as Special Agents Jan & Eliza. Teams should feel free to continue sending their puzzles in and remain eligible for Agent status. I just can't give you any more prizes. I could lose my job. - HF

For Our Dedicated Gamers:

THIS MONTH'S NOODLE EXERCISE

Dearest Readers & Candidate Agents:

Due to the overwhelming success of our lexiconical crossword puzzle, we've decided to institute the Bureau of Puzzles & Games as a regular feature. This month, we ask simply that all gaming participants respond to each question as honestly and interestingly as possible. Answers must be penned in the allotted space and mailed to the Bureau to be eligible for the prize. You must obtain a postmark by May 20 to be eligible. My team of expert judges will inspect your form for accuracy, dexterity of thought, and penmanship. The winner will not only see his or her name and answers published in this space, but also receive a free dinner for two at the Standard Tap and permanent Top Secret Agent status within the Bureau. Please keep all answers tasteful, as vulgarity is a sign of a poor vocabulary and a supine mind.

I look forward to serving you in the future.

Cordially,

-Henry Floss

Chairman, Bureau of Puzzles & Games

THIS MONTH'S NOODLE EXERCISE: A POP QUIZ PRIZE: DINNER FOR TWO AT THE STANDARD TAP

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the Quiz in the space provided below using a pen or pencil. Clip along the dotted lines. Mail the quiz to Henry Floss, Bureau of Puzzles & Games, The Philadelphia Independent, 307 Market Street, 2nd Floor, Philadelphia, PA, 19106. Include a 3 x 5 index card with your name, address, telephone number, and email. The prize will go to the set of answers postmarked by May 20 and judged to be the best by H.F.'s team of expert jurors.

1. What is the maximum number of blocks that one can legally walk in a SEPTA subway tunnel?
2. What was the lead story in the first issue of THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT?
3. What's the best way to separate the game from the truth?
4. Which Center City block has the tallest trees?
5. If the owner of a bar serves you a bottle of beer, should you leave a tip? What should you do about the tip?
6. Which bridge in Philadelphia has the most character?
7. What is the origin of the Rittenhouse Square observation booth?
8. Do you drink Philadelphia tap water? Where does it come from?
9. Is there a store or restaurant you avoid because the clerks hate you? Why do they hate you so?
10. Who is the best musical artist or group to ever claim Philadelphia as home?
11. Where can a mule be born in Philadelphia?
12. What is the quickest route from the Art Museum to the Platt Bridge?
13. What do the sharpest peacocks wear afterhours?
14. Does crime ever pay, and if so, how much?
15. In ten words or less, what is the nature of Philadelphia?
16. Do you wear sweatpants?

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- ✓ RE/DESIGN YOUR LOGO & LETTERHEAD
- ✓ REVITALIZE YOUR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS
- ✓ ALL OF THE ABOVE



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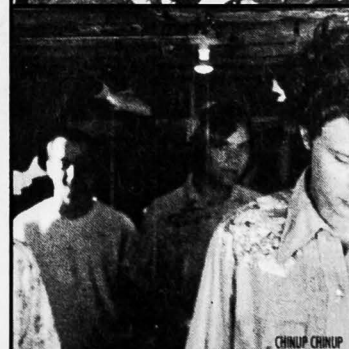
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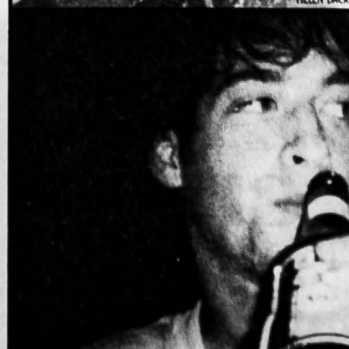
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True If Destroyed

FRI 4/25
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Mondo Topless
Buzz Sawyer

THU 5/1
Sal Volatile (DC)
Joey Beltram

FRI 5/2 • \$8
Mercury Program
(Tigerstyle Records)
June Panic
(Secretly Canadian Recs.)
Chinup Chinup (of Chicago)

THU 5/8 • \$8
R5 and Plain Parade present
Alan Sparhawk (of Low)
Bitter, Bitter Weeks
(My Pal God Records)
Haley Bonar
if thousands

FRI 5/9
Helen Back & The
Str8 Razors
Mimirock (NYC)

FRI 5/16
Creatures of the Golden
Down (feat. Brother JT)
Graveyard School
Cignal (Boston, ex-Explosion)

FRI 5/23 • \$8
R5 and Plain Parade present
Fog (Ninja Tune Records)
Doshi (Martin of Anticon)
Kandy Whales

FRI 5/30
Walkie Talkies
(final show in philly!)
Sand Family
Just Go No Texas
LotSix

FRI 6/6
BiMonSciFiCon
Surround
Dragon City

FRI 6/20
Karl Hendricks Trio
(Merge Records)

FRI 6/27
Downbeat 5
(featuring members of DMZ)
Thee Minks

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Philadelphia Independent



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MONTHLY MAY FORECAST

TAPE ME TO THE FRIDGE

ANY SPRING DAY 10 & EVERYDAY 12 MONDAY 15 THURSDAY 17 SATURDAY 21 WEDNESDAY

What the Sun Said

Excellent chances of cobblestones drenched in dappled sunshine. This is the kind of sunshine that will inspire you to pause and think, "Gee, for too long I have sucked at the teats of mediocrity, a gangly novice now overgrown. Am I not trained in the use of the rag and the stethoscope? Will a silly law prevent me from making salt, as my ancestors have done for generations before? I'm only a peasant girl of nineteen, but I could raise my own army, right? How I drool at the feet of my nearsighted lessers, openly lusting after their plump gigs. But no longer! They too shall be overthrown. This cave is starting to give me the creeps."

And the sun will wink and say back to you: "My darling, fall in love and make war on the world, a soft and bloodless war, breaking out all the time and everywhere."

6 TUESDAY

Office Hours at THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT
What? Your roommate is Sam Katz's nephew? You think you could swing us an interview maybe?

THE PHILADELPHIA INDEPENDENT has open office hours for prospective writers, artists and other interested parties. Every other Tuesday, with a high probability of snacks. 5 p.m. - 7 p.m., 307 Market Street, 2nd Floor. And Tuesday May 20 as well. If you'd like to come, please call 215-351-0777 on Monday to R.S.V.P.

9 FRIDAY

Up All Night: Writers Recall Their Childhood Fears, 7:30 p.m.
@ The Rosenbach Museum & Library, 2010 Delancey Place; \$8

In 2008, Princeton University will break ground on the Center for the Advanced Study of Porky Pig. Complete with four tenure-level faculty positions and lots of cool plasma screen gizmos, the center's dedication to pop culture *trif* will establish Princeton as the new national leader of culture studies and is sure to twist up a few *tsitzis* at the Hill Center across the way.

Unlike Princeton, our own Rosenbach has managed to make itself relevant to contemporary culture without compromising its heritage of tobacco-scented tweeds. Rather than condescending to talk about whatever happens to be popular, the Rosenbach endeavors to elevate the status of recent works—like Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*—to their full potential within the canon by exhibiting them in sumptuously appointed, recently renovated rooms right beside Joyce, Cervantes and Melville.

Tonight, Darin Strauss (wrote *Chang & Eng*), John K. Hodgman (a former literary agent), Hanna Tinti (edits *One Story*) and Whitney Pastorek (edits *Pindalys*) will honor Sendak by sharing their own childhood fears. There will be a 215 Festival fundraiser afterwards. Maybe you can ask if one of these fetching young writers would be so kind as to show you their special blankie. If not, Frank Smigel will be a good sport and catwalk for you. Frank knows that "party" is a verb.

The Sendak exhibit continues through June 29. Visit www.rosenbach.org or www.215festival.com for more information.

Clerk Appreciation Month

Just ask your landlord, who uses his parking tickets as coasters, or that gregarious man with the shopping cart full of junk, who never seems to have any money but always has a full cup of coffee, or the Central Intelligence Agency, which gets paid billions of dollars a year to make friends with clerks from other countries, or anyone who has ever traveled by plane. The civilized world is a cruel, jagged checkerboard of minutes and wards my friends, and clerks rule every last piece of it. When your trash is in the street and your video is late, it is a clerk who will decide whether or not to cut you some slack. At the very end of your days there will be three entries beside your name; once born, once married, once died, written in the anonymous hand of three dutiful clerks.

Not to get down on clerks, so terrifying in the abstract and yet so humane and inspiring when encountered in person. The dutiful clerk is a pain and a bore; the idling clerk is amusing, cute, even, at times, slightly, maybe; the truant clerk belies description with his absence; but it is the corrupt clerk, the clerk who uses her counter as a base of operations from which to launch enterprising campaigns of conspiracy and insubordination who deserves the sum of our praise and the brunt of our hearts.

Not to mention gifts, and this is, after, all, May, and we now declare the entire month of May to be Clerk Appreciation Month, because a tip is not enough, not nearly enough, to show our appreciation for these sublime creatures. We're sure you'll have your own ideas of how to observe this holiday, but here are some starters:

NAME	JOB	SUGGESTED GIFT
Lydia	Retrospect @ 534 South	cleaning supplies, cat food
Adam	The Last Drop @ 13th & Pine	motorcycle
Chris	Spaceboy @ 409 South St.	hair clippers
Sheila	Parking Authority @ 1501 Arch	powerball tickets
Matt	Taco House @ 1218 Pine	fishing canoe
Ryan	Blue & Green @ 7 N. 3rd	comic books
Tim	The Book Trader @ 5th & South	big hug

11 SUNDAY

Constitutional

Urban life offers a wide variety of spiritual and mental obstacles, but far too many benches, couches and other surfaces that are designed for reclination and tend to imbue a slothful attitude in the sitter. Just ask John Ashcroft—a lack of vigorous exercise can cast a pall on the heartiest constitution. Luckily, the warm weather will allow you to banish these sedentary demons with a brisk constitutional. At dawn, set out with a day's provisions. Bed down on the turf at dusk and sleep under the stars. Repeat, until you reach an ocean. Then treat yourself to some cotton candy and a few games of blackjack, because you've earned it.

Sell Your Car

Who do think you're fooling anyway? You can't afford that car, not in this economy. Haven't you been listening to your suppliers, chief? Costs are up! Demand is down! You'd do well to choose the simple life now, because one of these quarters it may just choose you. Sell that car and sell it now, before everybody else catches on to this great idea and you can still get a decent price.

Why spend thousands of precious, precious dollars keeping your rolling cage up to inspection when you could be narrowly avoiding death at ten different speeds? Sure, some of your friends won't like the new you, the one who's always showing up with dirty fingers, like you just finished wrestling with a mountain lion in a puddle of oil, but hey, if they care so much about what you look and smell like, I'd say those weren't real friends anyways. Besides, their gilded days of fancy bottled smells and dry cleaned garments are numbered. For now, take comfort in knowing that they have to watch the city on the windshield's television while you're feeling the warm May wind in your hair and watching the wide-format film of the earth spin by.

What about wintertime, you ask, with its hail and slippery streets? I'd say that winter will bring more urgent needs. You will need to beat back the cold and hunger with coal and cat food. You will need to stand in a long line outside IKEA with bushels and bushels of whatever it is that you're supposedly producing all day. No bushels, no particleboard sofa. So sell your car, take the money, and hide it under your mattress or beneath your floorboards, because the bank runs are just getting started. Get yourself a Blue Book and dump that jalopy on eBay.

13 TUESDAY

Rap in the Shower

Like Fidel Castro. It's how all the greats got started.

14 WEDNESDAY

Goodminton

The game used to be called "goodminton," before the addition of a net, and lines, and rules. This afternoon, why not bring back the olden days when gangs of sporty thugs ran through the streets, chasing a live goose with rackets? Or if you can't find a goose, a shuttlecock will suffice. Or a smallish kid in a triple-weight geese-down coat although this option is usually most prevalent during colder months. Don't let that shuttlecock out of your sight!

Erica Jong at the Free Library, 8 p.m.

@ 1901 Vine Street; \$6-\$12
If she ran off with Saul Bellow and Camille isn't returning your calls, this could be your best chance to even the score.

16 FRIDAY

The moment the war begins, with our troops in harm's way, would be a good time for the protesters to sit down and shut up. — Stu Bykofsky, the *Daily News*, 19 March 2003

SIESTA

Between Noon and 2 p.m. is the Siesta. At this time the workers leave their jobs and engage in self-conscious and conspicuous loafing. Purists usually lie down and feign that they are taking a nap until actually succumbing to sleep. Others sit on a bench and read a book. Today is the first Siesta. Additional Siestas will take place at times and places of our choosing.

The precise use of the Siesta hour is at the discretion of the worker. We recommend a nap. More than anything else, this is to be a time to step outside the cash economy and neither produce nor consume anything of value. Ideally, this juvenile and inconsequential act of protest should be performed in public.

The siesta hour is one of selective ignorance. The observant is to take advantage of this time to dissociate from the headache of our current crisis. It is a silent battle against the ghosts that plague our days.

Is this making sense? Right after lunch, give yourself over to the internal cues that make you sleepy after a noontime summer meal and get down to relaxing. Take a long, leisurely stroll to a nearby park bench or sidewalk and have a seat. Sit quietly, maybe read a book. And if the feeling somnambulism overcomes you, then by all means close her eyes and drift away. The world grows smaller, and all is still.

"Mapping the Matrix" Symposium, 3 p.m. - 5 p.m.

@ Tuttleman, Room 101, 13th & Montgomery Temple University; Free

From the press release: "Remember in *The Matrix*, when Morpheus offers Neo a red pill or blue pill. Take the blue pill and reenter the virtual world of the matrix. Take the red pill and see the world as it really exists. Mapping the Matrix is a red pill for understanding *The Matrix* as it really is."

In this case, the red pill is a panel of futurists and academics who have spent a fair bit of time earnestly studying of *The Matrix* and have graciously agreed to spend two hours prepping you for the sequel, which opens tonight.

Most prominent among these experts is one Prof. William Irwin of King's College, august editor of *The Matrix and Philosophy*, *The Simpsons and Philosophy*, and *Seinfeld and Philosophy*. No word as of press time whether Prof. Irwin will be able to put together some rough lecture notes on "Iverson and Philosophy" in time for the playoffs.

Also appearing on the panel is Elissa Durrutte, a futurist who studies media trends for Kinko's. Don't ask her if there's a flyer hookup in your future—it may seem funny to you but it really annoys the hell out of her. Plus, it has nothing to do with *The Matrix*, or philosophy, for that matter.

Back to the press release: "Mapping the Matrix will track the web of cinematic metaphors in *The Matrix*."

20 TUESDAY:

Not registered? You're too late for the primary, but still have time for the big one in November. Just go to the nearest post office, pick up a registration form, fill it out, and mail it in. Presto! You're ready to vote.

VO TE

Juke, Jerk & Jive, 9 p.m. - 1:30 a.m.

@ The Ministry of Information, 449 Poplar; \$5; 21+
If months of late night turnarounds have blanchered your face into the ghastly color of your belt, scrape five bucks together and pair your beloved soul music with a feast of delicious, eponymous foods such as meatloaf, collard greens, and macaroni & cheese. The food is all you can eat and the drinks are pay as you go. It's Wednesday, so that's probably for the best.

There are billiards, but *why no dancing?* My feet are tapping. I'm getting antsy. Finish your drink, and wobble down Second on that fixed gear. There's still a few minutes of precious Wednesday left! Time for...

Fire in the Disco; 10 p.m. - 2:08 a.m.
@ SoMa, 33 S. Third St.; Free; 21+

They said his music was too loud but he wouldn't turn it down. They said his pants were too tight but they couldn't get them off. They even tried to make him change the name, but it was too late, because there were too many fliers, and pretty soon it didn't even matter, because the bar did pretty good for a Wednesday, and nobody ever went home alone.

Every Wednesday. Equal in guilt and intensity to sex with a head of state, but with fewer subpoenas and no regrets.

24 SATURDAY

African American Rodeo; 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m.

@ The U.S. Army, 33rd & Market
\$12.50, \$17.50, \$7.50 on Friday

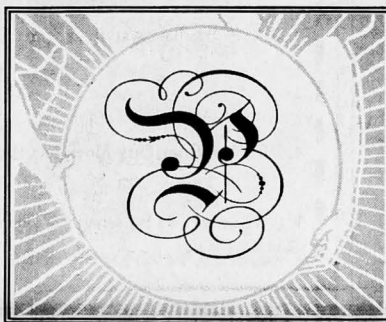
Somewhere between the rivers, on a block of abandoned factories and weed-filled lots, there is a barn. Inside the barn there are horses, and on the barn door, there is a single poster advertising this event.

Who are these men? Where are their secret stables? The very act of maintaining horses in a metropolis of today is a feat so lacking in plausibility and utility that it deserves our stunned applause. Also Friday and Sunday.

june 7 SATURDAY

Punk Rock Flea Market

@ The First Unitarian Church, 21st & Chestnut;
\$5 admission, \$20 for a half table, \$40 for a full table
R5 Productions hosts a benefit flea market on a yet-to-be determined Saturday to raise money towards a new \$18,000 air conditioning system for the church basement. Admission gets you a raffle ticket to win gift certificates, prizes, and the chance to give Dan Gross a mohawk. Only one lucky shopper will get to deliver the mohawk, but Dan has promised to make himself available for wedgies from the general public until close. Starts at Noon. Records, zines, bicycles, and enormous brass Wells-Fargo belt buckles will probably sell pretty well, but so will standard flea market stuff like furniture, obsolete computer equipment, canvas bags filled with nails, surplus military gear, burros, and the like. Email djr5000@aol.com if you'd like to reserve a table.



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www.brandywinemuseum.org

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Friday May 9th 7:30pm

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27 & GREGER SMASA

Saturday May 10th 2:30pm 'matinee'

BLACK EYES

AN ALBATROSS THE FAUX

Monday May 12th 7:30pm

I AM SPOONBENDER

Wednesday May 14th 7:30pm

MASTODON

CEPHALIC CARNAGE DYSRHYTHMIA

Wednesday May 21st 7:30pm

FLOOR

Tuesday May 27th 7:30pm

THE MAJESTICONS

BEANS (from antipop consortium)

Sunday June 1st 7:30pm

At Transit Nighclub (6th and Spring Garden)

PREFUSE-73

MANITOBA FOUR TET

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Two screenings 9:00 and 11:00, Free

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An evening of Stop Motion Puppet Films
8 pm \$7-10

FRIDAY-JULY 25th

INDEPENDENT PUPPET FILMS

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FRIDAY-AUGUST 29th

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The Muppet Show Featuring Mumsenchantz,
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